Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

Dave Cook — The Student Movement, Left Unity and the Communist Party

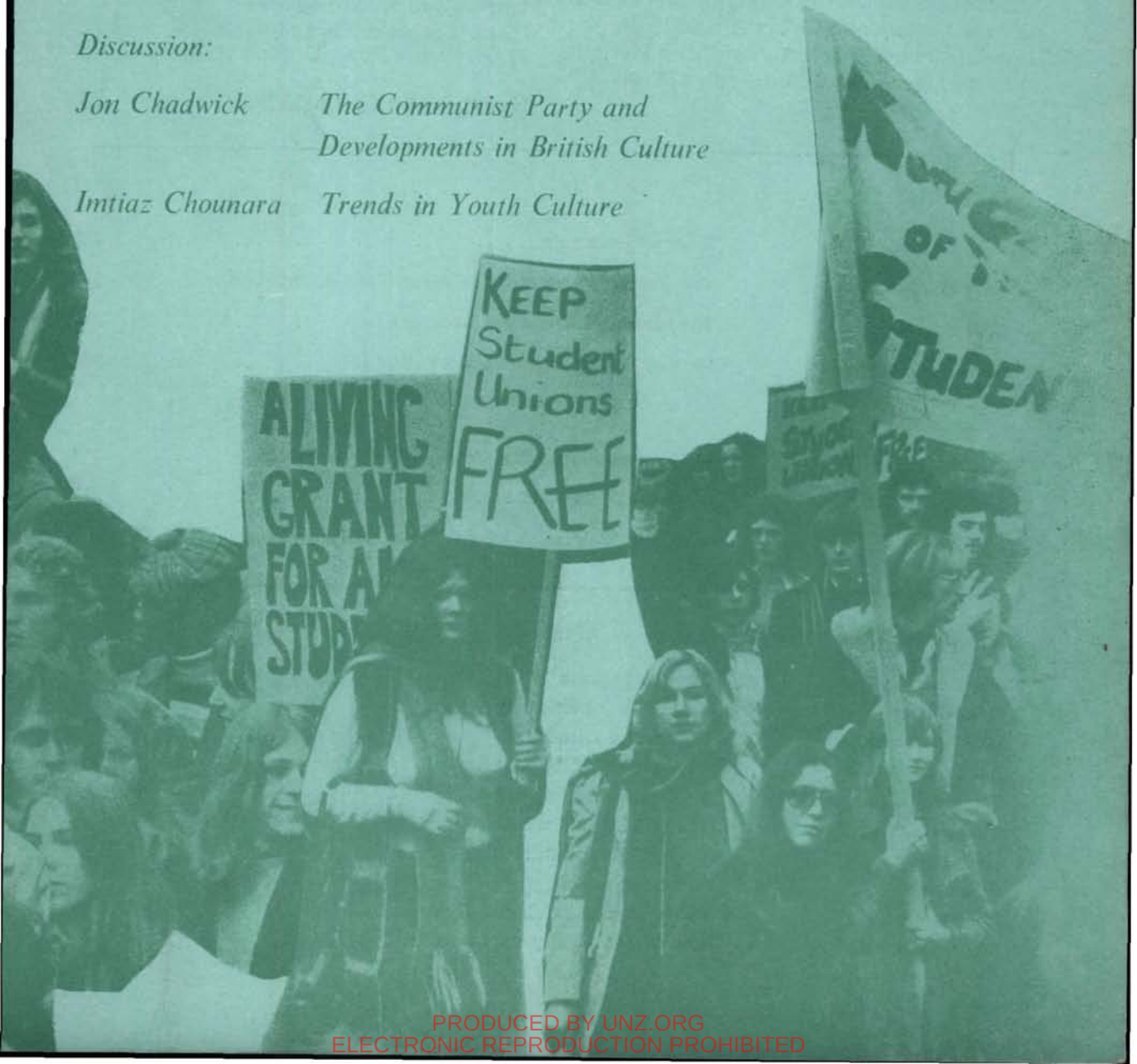
E. J. Hobsbawm — The Labour Movement and Military Coups

Maurice Cornforth — Sir Karl Popper — Doctrinaire Anti-Marxist

Discussion:

Jon Chadwick — *The Communist Party and Developments in British Culture*

Imtiaz Chounara — *Trends in Youth Culture*



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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

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CONTENTS

	Editorial Comments	289
Dave Cook	The Student Movement, Left Unity and the Communist Party ..	292
E. J. Hobsbawm	The Labour Movement and Military Coups	302
Maurice Cornforth	Sir Karl Popper—Doctrinaire Anti-Marxist	309
Discussion:		
Jon Chadwick	The Communist Party and Developments in British Culture ..	314
Imtiaz Chounara	Trends in Youth Culture	317

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SOME ARTICLES PLANNED FOR NOVEMBER—DECEMBER ISSUES

Ron Bellamy	More on Inflation
E. A. Bitsakis	Relativism and Relativity
Donald Cameron	Problems of Heredity
Bill Carr	Memories of the General Strike
Tom Drinkwater	Crisis of British Imperialism
Ruth and Edmond Frow	The IWMA and the Manchester Working Class
Hans Hess	Georg Grosz (illustrated)
John Lewis	Marx and Weber
Ivor Montagu	Solzhenitsyn and Gulag Archipelago
Ray Volleamere	Karl Marx: Activity and Alienation

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Editorial Comments

ON September 12 the Portuguese Government gave formal recognition to the independent State of Guinea-Bissau. The date chosen is the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Amilcar Cabral, the former secretary-general of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) who was murdered by Portuguese fascist agents in January last year.

The independence of Guinea-Bissau, although only now recognised by Portugal after the overthrow of fascism, was formally declared last September by the People's National Assembly of Guinea-Bissau elected in all the liberated areas.

On November 5 last year the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution welcoming the new State. The resolution was passed by 93 votes to 7, with 30 abstentions. The seven against were Portugal (then fascist), Greece (then fascist), Spain (fascist), Brazil (fascist-type military dictatorship), South Africa (racialist tyranny), United States *and Britain* (then under a Tory Government). To its shame, the Labour Government failed to recognise Guinea-Bissau until practically everyone else had done so.

A recent pamphlet by Basil Davidson (*Growing from the Grassroots:* Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guine, 15p), provides a useful account of the way in which the PAIGC was able to build up, during its 17 years of political and armed struggle, a grassroots democracy which reached a new stage with the establishment of the independent State of Guinea-Bissau last year. Davidson writes:

> ". . . all this warfare in the thinking and policy of the PAIGC, has been no more than an unavoidable means to a far greater end than any mere military achievement, notable though this achievement was and is. The prime endeavour was and is to build a new society that renews the history of the people of Guinea-Bissau in a new form: a form liberated from the past, whether the past of 'traditional' society or the autocratic wretchedness of colonial rule."

To achieve this aim, Amilcar Cabral explained, it was necessary to liberate the productive forces and capacities of the Guinean people. Since this, in Cabral's words, required "a profound mutation in the condition of these productive forces, we see that the phenomenon of *national liberation* is necessarily one of *revolution*."

In *Marxism Today* (January 1974) our editorial notes gave some details of the Constitution of the new State of Guinea-Bissau, which clearly indicated the character of the new society which the PAIGC and the Guinean people were determined to create—". . . a society that shall create the political economic and cultural conditions needed to eliminate the exploitation of man by man."

The recognition of the independence of Guinea-Bissau by the Portuguese provisional government is a historic landmark in the relations of Portugal and its former African colonies. The struggle of the African people stimulated progressive changes in Portugal itself, including in the armed forces. The joint blows struck against Portuguese fascism by the African national liberation movements and by the Portuguese people, including the Armed Forces Movement, overthrew the Caetano regime. The installation of a new government in Lisbon, based on the Portuguese people's democratic struggle and on the Armed Forces Movement, has, in its turn, facilitated the final liberation of Guinea-Bissau.

The Portuguese Communist Party has hailed it as "a great victory for the people of Guinea-Bissau, a great victory for the Portuguese people as well as for all those who for many years fought in Portugal for ending colonialism and colonial wars. . . . It is a new stimulus for invigorating and successfully completing the process of negotiations with the national liberation movements, with the peoples of Mozambique and Angola, Frelimo and the MPLA."

JAPANESE COMMUNISTS' BIG ELECTORAL GAINS

In the elections this July to Japan's Upper House, the House of Councillors, the Japanese Communist Party registered significant advance.

The election was fought in an atmosphere of bitter "anti-communism". Not only the reactionary parties, but also the Democratic Socialists and the Komeito worked hard to stoke up anti-communist feeling. Neither did the Socialist Party stay outside this campaign.

A scandalous feature of the elections was the open intervention by the big monopolies. In addition to the truly huge sums handed

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over by Mitsui, Mitsubishi and other firms to the LDP (the ruling Liberal Democratic Party) and to individual LDP candidates, these big companies instructed their employees to actively campaign on behalf of LDP candidates. Extraordinary pressures and intimidation were used for this purpose.

Before the elections the Communist Party had appealed especially to the Socialist Party, but also to the Komeito and the Democratic Socialist Party, to form a united electoral front against the LDP—but all three parties rejected this proposal.

As a consequence, instead of the elections taking the form of a left coalition against the ruling LDP, the centre of battle was shifted into a struggle between the LDP and the Communist Party.

An interesting analysis of the election results was provided on July 18 in a lecture given in Tokyo by Tetsuzo Fuwa, Chief of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Japan.

First, the ruling LDP lost eight seats and its percentage of the poll in the local constituencies went down from 44 per cent in 1971 to 39.5 per cent—the first time in 15 years that its percentage has dropped below 40.

Secondly, the Communist Party won 13 seats and now has 20 members in the House of Councillors. In the local constituencies *it increased its vote from 3.22 million to 4.93 million, an increase of 1.7 million.* Its percentage of the poll also went up in both cases (from 12 to 12.8 per cent in the local constituencies, and from 8.1 to 9.4 per cent in the national constituency).

"In particular", stressed Tetsuzo Fuwa, "what is remarkable about the present election is that the Party won fresh advances not only in the big cities but in certain districts of smaller towns and rural areas where the Party's political and organisational influence is regarded as still weak".

At the same time, he drew attention to a certain "slackness" and "complacency" in Tokyo, based on over-optimism, which prevented the Party from being able to "fully exhaust the potential of the Party and its supporters".

The Japanese Socialist Party won 28 seats, but its percentage of the poll declined. The Komeito won 14 seats, an increase of one, but its percentage went down. The Democratic Socialist Party lost seats and its percentage of the vote declined. The Communist Party was the only Party to increase its number of seats *and* increase its percentage of the votes *and* its number of votes.

DEMOCRACY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

In view of the attacks made against the Communist Party of Japan by the LDP as well as by the other opposition parties on the false grounds of the Party's alleged hostility to democracy, Tetsuzo Fuwa expounded the Party's attitude towards this question:

> "In the history of mankind, scientific socialism is indeed the most progressive successor to modern democracy.
>
> "What is the central content of modern democracy? It is, above all, the principle of the people's sovereignty, the principle of sovereignty resting with the people".

Noting the significance of the Declaration of Rights of Man in the French Revolution (1789) and the Declaration of Independence in the United States of America (1776) as "representative documents of modern democracy", he stressed that "these documents clarified that the core of modern democracy rested on the principle of the people's sovereignty, the sovereignty of the nation".

Tetsuzo Fuwa drew attention to the role played by the "forces of scientific socialism" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whenever the sovereignty of the people was under attack. He cited Marx and Engels, for example, who, in commenting on the programme of the German Party, "consistently and strongly asserted the demand for the people's sovereignty and a republican system, for 'concentrating all political powers in the institution, representing the people' ". In the same way, Tetsuzo Fuwa pointed out, Lenin stressed that the system of a bourgeois republic, parliament and universal suffrage constituted great progress from the viewpoint of world social development.

Dealing with the past 50 years, Tetsuzo Fuwa emphasised that:

> "When fascism and militarism endangered the entire world before World War Two, it was the Communist Parties that stood to the fore and fought for the great cause of defending democracy at the risk of their lives, calling for a united front against fascism. This is an historical fact, recorded with the blood of countless fighters who fell in the struggle."

Referring to the particular role of the Communist Party of Japan since its foundation 52 years ago, he recalled that "it upheld the flag of the people's sovereignty"

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right from its commencement. In fact, right up to the period of the enactment of the existing Constitution in 1947 and since, there was no political party, except the Communist Party that clearly asserted in domestic and external affairs the principle of the sovereignty of the people; and the Party's proud tradition is that it defended the flag of democratic rights in defiance of all persecution and oppression.

To those alleging that the Communist Party's insistence on democracy is only a temporary tactic, Fuwa replies: "Far from acting temporarily the Communist Party of Japan is the only party that has fought for half a century to establish and defend democratic government based on the principle of sovereignty residing in the people. Is this fact not the most weighty reply to these anti-communist attacks?"

ELITES AND CLASSES

Much modern sociological study of social classes seems to demonstrate a superb capacity to confuse the issue, to befog the study of *real* social relations in a mist of verbal obscurity and irrelevant categories—the wood is lost in the trees and the class dissolved into elites.

But, on the other hand, some of those involved in such research (even if they do not wish or are unable to carry their evidence to its logical conclusions) *do* produce extremely valuable material that is very useful for the understanding of social reality.

These two contradictory aspects are revealed in a recent book edited-under the title *Elites and Power in British Society*[1]—by Philip Stanworth and Anthony Giddens. It contains 11 papers first presented at a working conference sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation in March 1973.

In his paper on "The British Political Elite", W. H. Guttsman studies, amongst other things, the class and educational backgrounds of British MP's. Predictably enough he discovers that, on an average, between 1918-1935 39.3 per cent studied at Oxbridge and from 1951-70 52.6 per cent. In 1951, he calculates, 1.5 per cent of Tory MP's were workers or white collar by "occupational background". In 1970 this had fallen to the noble figure of 0.9 per cent.

Whether or not one can accept his categories of classification, there is a warning in his estimate that the 40.6 per cent worker and white collar "occupational background" of Labour Party MP's in 1951 had fallen to 27.5 per cent in 1970 and in his conclusion that "the two parliamentary parties are becoming similar in respect of their social background and career patterns".

DIRECTORS AND THEIR DADS

The book contains some interesting studies on financiers and industrialists. Richard Whitley in his paper on "The City and Industry" studies a characteristic cluster of top banks and large industrial corporations to find that two-thirds of the directors of industrial companies attending institutes of higher education went to Oxford or Cambridge compared with 87 per cent of the more privileged directors of banks and financial institutions.

Stanworth and Giddens, studying 460 company chairmen on the basis of a large sample of banks and industrial corporations find little evidence of the much-vaunted rise from the workshop (or office) floor.

Five at the most of his 460 chairmen were of working class origin. The great majority were Oxbridge and public school. "It is commonly asserted", he writes, "that while in other institutional settings, such as Parliament, the Civil Service, the Army and the Church, there has been a relatively 'closed' process of recruitment . . . the sphere of industry has been a haven of opportunity for the boy of lowly background intent on achieving high position".

Not so with Directors, he replies, backed with an impressive array of statistics, and still less with company chairmen. So far as opportunities to rise from the ranks are concerned, the higher the fewer!

The data (from 1820 to 1939), he writes, "do not indicate that there has occurred a process of increasing 'openness' of recruitment to the chairs of the largest corporations but, if anything, something the contrary of this: The numbers of chairmen deriving from working-class backgrounds is negligible at all periods. . . ."

He views the future with scepticism. Any change that may come in the existing economic elite "is likely to stop short, as in previous generations, at the doors of the board-room".

C. D. Harbury and P. C. McMahon present a paper on "Inter-generational Wealth Transmission". The former had published an earlier study of the role of inheritance in

(concluded on page 319)

[1] Stanworth and Giddens (editors)—*Elites and Power in British Society*—Cambridge University Press, paperback £2.00, hardback. £5.00.

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THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, LEFT UNITY AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

Dave Cook

(The author was Student Organiser of the Communist Party during the last two years. He is now Communist Party National Election Agent.)

Over the last ten years the number of full-time students in higher and further education in Britain has more than doubled, and in 1971, the last year for which complete figures are available, totalled 673,935. The membership of the National Union of Students is now approximately 650,000. However, over this period the political changes among the student population and in their mass organisations have been as striking as their numerical expansion. This article attempts to assess the role that left unity has played in these political changes, and to consider some of the problems and the potential that arise from work to unite left forces in the student movement.

Changing Relationship to the Working Class

Before the Second World War the social background of the student population was *relatively* homogeneous, with a clear majority drawn from the ruling class and the social strata which nestled against it. Although this element remains as an important constituent of the student population today, increasingly the intake into post-school education draws upon students from middle strata and, to a lesser extent, working-class backgrounds. There are two main reasons why this social base has been broadened. Firstly, and most importantly, society's expanding requirements for skilled technical and intellectual labour could not be satisfied unless recruits from new social strata were drawn upon. Secondly, political pressure both from the Labour Party and the Communist Party and from among educational opinion forced significant expansions in the provision of places—even though new ways of continuing social selection were built into the new structure. In post-school education the binary system[1] duplicated the class divisions that the tripartite[2] system reflected at the secondary level, and to an important extent effectively corralled students from working-class backgrounds into certain types of colleges and on to certain types of courses.

More marked than these changes in social origin have been changes in the social *destination* of very large numbers of students. In sharp contrast to the situation before World War II when degree qualifications conferred a high income and social status, the majority of students now find employment in jobs which can no longer be considered "privileged": in teaching, in scientific work, administration, the professions, the public services, the Civil Service, social work and the media. These occupations can conveniently be grouped under the heading "middle strata". What has changed so markedly is not so much the list of jobs, all of which would certainly

[1] The Binary System is the division of post-school education between the University Sector and other sorts of college. The former has higher status and greater autonomy. It usually has first choice for suitably qualified school-leavers. In general, its staff are paid more, its students receive higher grants, facilities are better and there is more money at its disposal. There are also many divisions between other sorts of college—e.g. Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and of Art, Technical and Further Education—but that which separates the universities is the main one.

[2] The Tripartite System was the Secondary educational system established by the 1944 Education Act, which divided Secondary Schools (and minds) into three categories—grammar, secondary modern and technical. In fact, the third category was a non-starter, and the tripartite system was in fact as "binary" as the post-school system.

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suggest an undercurrent of student resentment that stems from these contradictions and which in the future may assume an explosive potential.

The Crisis of Imperialism

These developments within the educational system have taken place against a background of intensifying crisis for world imperialism, which has detonated a succession of political charges into the student population, as they have into all sections of society.

However, because of the peculiar conditions of student existence, their impact in the colleges has often taken more pronounced forms. The fight against Apartheid, the South African cricket tour, Vietnam, Che Guevara, National Liberation Struggles, the whole rich but contradictory political infusion of 1968, the growing disenchantment with Labour Governments, the fight against the Industrial Relations Act, the miners' strikes, Chile, the issue of fascist and racist speakers—these events and many more represent a series of political influences that have pounded student consciousness in successive resonating waves. Similarly, events in the Socialist countries have made a deep impact among the left; the Sino-Soviet dispute and the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia as much as the solidarity the Socialist countries have given to those fighting imperialism all over the world.

It is important to recognise the unique features of student life which can magnify, and sometimes distort, the impact made by these political pressures. Because they are a section of the population in social movement and are not a social class, students in their consciousness draw upon a greater variety of pressures and influences, social, economic, political and cultural, than those more embedded in the social structure of society. The one area their consciousness draws upon most weakly is working-class experience.

Because they are removed from the direct process of production, the pressures and rhythms of their lives are determined by the educational institution and its demands. Although these differ greatly between different colleges and different courses, in general students have a much "freer" allocation of their time open to them than do workers, and are much less subject to discipline.

Students are, above all, young. Nowhere else in capitalist society are young men and women separated off and grouped together in the same way. There are no factories containing only young workers; yet increasingly the development of education concentrates growing numbers of students into relatively closed communities, isolated from the rest of the population. The isolation enables them to adopt a "life style", a morality and political attitude to an extent independent of norms their parents, and social background, may wish them to abide by.

Now, these "peculiar conditions of student existence" can have contradictory results. On one side, they can wipe clean previously restricting attitudes and release enormous enthusiasm and lack of inhibition in adopting new political views and enable rapid progression to conclusions others may take longer to reach. On the other hand, they can lead to adventurism, élitist arrogance, and the most dangerous forms of anarchism and ultra-leftism.

The Student Movement

Over the last decade the British student population has been affected by the social changes and the political and ideological pressures which the first part of this article has so far described. These pressures have not borne down equally on all students and, at different times, have drawn very different responses from different sectors. Furthermore, the sharpening economic and political crisis leads to a left-right polarisation in all sections of society and students are no exception. Large numbers of students *still* come from backgrounds likely to be activated in an anti-working-class direction from this polarisation. However, bearing in mind that the potential for right-wing politics among students may recently have been enlarged, the fact remains that over recent years, and including the last year when the polarising results of the crisis have been at their sharpest, very many students have been won to take militant collective action both on the issues that confront them in college and in solidarity with the working class. It is in this that the real significance of these pressures so far described lie. They have created the conditions out of which the student *movement* has been built.

Considerable numbers of students were mobilised in democratic anti-fascist campaigns in the late '30s, and NUS had a "Broad Left" type leadership over some of the war years and up to 1948, when the right wing took over in the wake of the cold war build-up of that year. From 1948 until 1970, NUS had a right-wing careerist leadership, although from 1963 to 1969 their rule was increasingly challenged. National Conferences were castrated of political discussion by a "no politics" rule, and its international alignment closely bound in with CIA-financed student fronts and US cold war politics.

Beginning in 1965/66, and only successful with the election of a left-wing majority to NUS executive in 1970 for the first time since 1948, was a bitter struggle to wrest control of NUS out of the hands of this leadership. However, only since 1970 is it possible to speak of the student movement beginning to express itself through NUS. In the period 1965 to 1970, the powerful student mobilisations around overseas student fees in 1966, the wave of "sit-ins"

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have featured prominently in any estimate of student employment between the First and Second World Wars, but the role and character of these jobs in State monopoly capitalist Britain. In place of relatively small professional élites, as they were in the 1930s, they are now massive employers of work forces, many hundreds of thousands strong, whose interests increasingly coincide with those of the industrial working class.

Now this change in social direction triggers off political results of great importance in the colleges. Students, whose job expectations lie within these areas, feel the impact of the buffeting these middle strata sections of the population are receiving, and all the accompanying politicisation that stems from the growth of trade union consciousness among them; albeit an impact which is one degree removed.

Attacks on the Students

Students also feel a more direct jolt from the attacks that successive Tory and Labour Governments have made upon the student population, as a group in society, as part of their attempts to switch the burden of the present crisis on to the working population as a whole. This attack has taken an economic form, as student grants have been held back while costs and fees rocket; a democratic form with the attempt by the last Conservative Government in 1971/72 to destroy the relatively high degree of autonomy student unions enjoy; and an ideological form as sections of the media have lost no opportunity to pillory student political action. One of the latest examples has been the way many papers have enthusiastically endorsed the conclusions of the Annan Report into the events at Essex University, where in time-honoured fashion the cause of the "disturbances" is attributed to a few "militants" who lead the majority of "moderates" by the nose.

These attacks on students as a group in society have mounted over the last few years. The response that student unions have made to these attacks, at both a national and a local level, through such actions as the 18-month-long Grants Campaign of 1973/74, have strengthened the unity, cohesiveness and feeling of identity of the student movement. Their reaction has parallelled the enormously more powerful defence by the trade union movement against attacks from the last Tory Government that were in some way similar, and over the same period.

Thus, the relationship of students to the working class has been transformed in two main ways. Firstly, social changes in their composition, and destination on completion of study *begin* to connect them to categories of employment where trade union organisation and militant struggle are becoming more important. Secondly, their experience under the hammer of Government policy links the reaction of the student movement and working-class organisations in a relationship of alliance against a common enemy.

This change is more than one of positional relationship. The mass organisations of the working class themselves are changing as the left militant trends within them grow stronger. This means that the political impact exerted by working-class organisations on students is correspondingly greater than in the mid-60s, when the right-wing trend was much more securely in the ascendant.

The Position of Education in Monopoly Capitalism

A further cluster of politicising influences upon sections of the student population stem from the contradiction between what the ruling class require of post-school education and what many students want. The great monopolies and the State have continually sought to restructure the educational system so that it corresponds more closely to *their* needs for skilled personnel. For this reason, the last Tory Government's White Paper—"Higher Education: a Framework for Expansion"—designated the Polytechnic sector as a priority for expansion. With these institutions the links with the requirements of the monopolies, expressed in such ways as courses and research geared to industrial need and business representation on college governing bodies, are particularly close.

However, State monopoly capitalism does not only need generations of increasingly accomplished technical, managerial and professional workers. The system of post-school education must also play its part in recreating the social relations of production, so that each new generation of students learns its *place* in the system. How these ideological influences are permeated is an extremely complicated process, which involves consideration of the structures of teaching and study as well as the content of what is taught.

Because of its complexity, it is an area where over-simplification can lead to what boils down to a crude and mistaken assertion that education is tantamount to brainwashing. Attention must be paid to the relative autonomy of much faculty organisation and academic work and to the vigour of genuinely critical traditions of scientific enquiry which strongly resist the pressures of bourgeois ideology.

These two drives—one structural, the other ideological—to make post-school education able to more effectively serve the class that dominates society have come into conflict with the aspirations of many students for education more orientated to social relevance, education which takes a critical stance to the realities of the crisis. Important mass struggles over recent years, around issues like big business involvement in the institution, democracy in the faculty and over the nature of assessment,

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in 1967, the Vietnam solidarity movement and the "Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation" of 1968 exploded *outside* the confines of NUS politics, although their reverberations reinforced the fight of the left within the National Union.

The first serious challenge to the right in NUS was mounted in 1966/67 by the "Radical Student Alliance", a grouping of Communists, Labour and Liberal students aligned to student union activists belonging to no political organisation. The ultra-left political groups *at this stage* dismissed NUS politics, and concentrated their efforts around the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign and the RSSF, which was promoted as a "revolutionary" agency to by-pass the "reformist" NUS.

While it was correct for Communist Party students to lay the main emphasis on the fight for the unity of the left within NUS, as the precondition for the transformation of the mass organisation of the students, there was serious neglect by them of the ferment of politicisation outside of NUS politics —areas where significant numbers of students were deeply concerned with revolutionary issues, even though the immediate political expressions of that concern were often hostile to the Communist Party.

However, by 1971, when the Conservative Government launched its attack on Student Union autonomy, it was NUS which led and co-ordinated the fight back by the student movement, and it was the college and university student unions which mobilised students in their tens of thousands to action against this threat. A short-lived attempt by the International Socialist group (IS) and the International Marxist group (IMG) to build an alternative "more militant" Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions, at the height of the battle against Thatcher's Consultative Document in which the Tory attack was framed, collapsed.

Central Arena of the Movement

Since 1971 the mobilisation of students in collective action has increasingly been through the agency of NUS and the local unions. Union General Meetings and NUS National Conference are the central political arenas of the movement in a way unequalled over the last decade. In all the colleges where large-scale mass action has taken place on local issues—for example, Lancaster University and Brighton College of Education in 1972, Stirling University in 1973, and at Essex and Kent Universities in 1974—the Student Union has been the crucial debating chamber where the issue has been thrashed out, and around which the action has been organised. The uneven but often impressive mobilisations of the 18 months' grants campaign in 1973/74 were achieved through the Union, and the debates over the strategy and tactics of the campaign dominated national conference agendas for two years.

It is against this background that the problems of left unity in the student movement must been seen; in the context of a greatly enlarged student population, over the last ten years subject to social, political and ideological pressures on such a scale that the potential for a mass student movement has been created. The surges of collective action, which represented the first realisations of this potential, occurred both within and around NUS with the issue of overseas student fees and the RSA; and outside it with the VSC and the RSSF. These two expressions were more interconnected than this formulation makes them appear, and both contributed to the transformation of NUS and the Student Unions, which enabled these mass organisations to emerge after 1970 as the avenue through which student collective action now largely expresses itself.

All political groups, and at a local level increasingly the right-wing ones, now fight to win support for their policies in the mass organisation, because they know how important these organisations have become in determining the political direction of the student movement.

The Right Challenge Again

Although the left-wing organisations, with the exception of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS—membership approximately 8,000) are probably stronger now than at any time over the last ten years, in a number of important colleges, and to an extent at a national level, the right wing are now mounting a counter-attack. (The form that right-wing politics takes on the campus is often a relatively disguised one, of "moderates", of "democrats" or "radicals".)

What are the main reasons for this right-wing resurgence? Firstly, the severity of the political and economic crisis sets off counter pressures from precisely the opposite direction to the progressive ones so far described, and to some extent creates an objective basis among sections of the student population for a regeneration of the right. Secondly, concerned to repair the severity of the defeat of the right in the late '60s, and aware of the openings the present situation provides, the Federation of Conservative Students (who claim a membership of 15,000), backed by sections of the media, are beginning to organise, and to work to challenge, the left. Thirdly, mistakes made by the left, including Communist Party students, most notably the adoption of the now notorious Amendment 4 calling for the disruption of racist meeting by "whatever means are necessary" at the 1974 Easter Conference, have assisted the right to make an intervention.

Differing Levels of Struggle

Of course, having listed the various social,

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economic and political pressures which have bombarded the student population over the last decade, it is easy to fall into what has been aptly described (by Dave Courtino) as "clunk click" determinism. Capitalism attacks the students and hey presto!—into existence springs the student movement and brigades of socialist activists ready to fight capitalism. It certainly is the case that capitalism attacks students, as it attacks the whole working population—but people fight back against these attacks at enormously different levels of understanding. They fight the effects of capitalism on them *long before* they are ready to fight against capitalism itself; before they clearly recognise the need for an alternative social system.

Two examples, one from the 1930s and one from today, illustrate this. In British colleges during the Spanish Civil War, very many students were prepared to donate to medical aid funds for Republican Spain; a much smaller number were prepared to campaign for a change in the policy of the British Government from "non-intervention" to support for the Republicans; a small minority were prepared to go and fight in Spain, and some did so in the International Brigade. Today, very many students would totally condemn racialism. Large numbers gave active support to a campaign on an ideologically relatively "simple" issue like the Stop the '70s Tour. Fewer have penetrated the "free speech" minefield to recognise the need for mass action against emerging fascist organisations.

People have different levels of rebellion against capitalism, against different aspects of its oppression.

Communists want socialist revolution, and their aim is to convince others of its necessity—but Communists are not indifferent to "lower" levels of struggle[3]. Lenin took time out to condemn those in the revolutionary movement who declared themselves contemptuous of individuals and organisations concerned with limited objectives.

Therefore, Communists passionately support such struggles, and their mass organisations, helping them to win victories which they believe are worthwhile and important in their own right, and not as some political manoeuvre to "capture" them, or to gain positions. Of course, communists recognise that limited gains are no solution to the exploitation of capitalism, and try and convince those with whom they work of the need for revolutionary change; but this is completely different from an approach to work in mass organisations which is contemptuous of their "limited" objectives, and seeks only to use them to benefit the "revolutionary" objectives of another organisation.

Communists argue for left unity as the best way—indeed, as the only way—to win victories on these limited objectives. The unity Communists want is neither the manoeuvring of the caucus, nor the charade of the front. This article will now attempt to define the political basis of Broad Left Unity in more detail, and the relationship of the Communist Party to it.

The Broad Left Approach to Left Unity

The Broad Left is at present the only left *alliance* in the student movement at a national level. It is much more than unity on one specific issue; yet it is not an ideological unity around a socialist programme. Rather, it is an ongoing unity of organisations and individuals to win the student movement for policies with the objective of mobilising the *largest possible numbers of students to collective action* on both the issues that face them as students, and in solidarity with other progressive forces in society.

Nationally, the alliance unites Communist Party students (membership 1,000) and Left Labour students, many of whom are loosely connected to the "Clause Four" Group, whose political position they define as roughly corresponding to that of the "Tribune" Group ("Clause Four" do not have formal membership). Also participating is the largest of the three components, socialist students who are members of no organisation.

At a local level Broad Left support is often considerably "Broader", and can include overseas student organisations, women's movement groups, and single issue campaigning organisations like "Anti-Apartheid".

The Broad Left runs regular conferences, at which a "declaration of objectives" has been adopted, editorial boards of *The Broad Left Journal* elected, and has a growing number of local groups.

In student political terms, it has a long life. The present Broad Left can trace to lineage back to the RSA in 1966. Since 1970, it has dominated the political ground at NUS conferences (although it has often been strongly challenged by the ultra-left), and at present 13 of the 17-person NUS Executive were elected with the support of the Broad Left.

Impressive though this may appear, there are considerable problems facing the alliance. Firstly, although a section of Labour students participate in it, the official Labour student organisation, NOLS,

[3] Although others on the left sometimes are. In *Red Weekly*, August 1st, 1974, the IMG describe their attempts to get the IS to reach "an agreement within the coming anti-fascist mobilisations to organise a struggle for these actions to be clearly based on a working-class united front, and against attempts to extend it to 'progressive forces'," which IMG go on to describe as "Tories, vicars, etc. . . ." Those used to such politics will recognise this as a clear rejection of the value of any struggle which is not at the most "advanced" level, and therefore by definition incapable in the present situation, of involving more than a small minority.

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is dominated by the entrist (i.e. a secret organisation operating inside another) Trotskyist Group, the Revolutionary Socialist League (newspaper *Militant*) which is bitterly hostile to the Broad Left. Secondly, because both the Communist Party students and Clause Four are *organised* groupings, there is a feeling among Broad Left students who are members of neither, that decisions may be "carved up" between these two. Thirdly, there is suspicion between both organisations about each other's motives. Fourthly, precisely because NUS politics is seen as a battle arena by the whole left, politics there are usually argued out at the level of total ideological positions.

The ideological positions of the components of the Broad Left do not coincide, and thus the unity between them, which is at a more limited level, can be strained. This became clear in the debate about racist and fascist speakers at the July 1974 Emergency NUS Conference. Fifthly, there is a potential cause of friction between the two main organisational expressions of Broad Left Unity at a national level, the Broad Left Group on NUS Executive, and the Editorial Board of the *Broad Left Journal*.

In listing these internal "problem" areas for the Broad Left, no "State secrets" are being given away. All of them are the subject of intense discussion within the alliance, and have been publicly aired at Broad Left conferences. Such frank discussions between the various components of the alliance are the only way these problems can be overcome.

One particular feature of the Broad Left stands out as testimony to its significance. The main objective of the growing right wing challenge is to unseat or splinter the Broad Left. This the Federation of Conservative Students have publicly stated (and this, at the 1974 Easter NUS Conference, they tried to do), urging their supporters to vote for anyone, even ultra-leftists, who seemed to have a chance of defeating a Broad Left candidate.

Ultra-left Approaches to Left Unity

The main common feature of the various ultra-left approaches to left unity in the student movement, as in other areas, is that they fail to recognise that there are different levels of struggle. Either they dismiss these differences as unimportant, or they believe that the introduction of more "advanced" objectives into a campaign or an organisation will somehow automatically promote it up the league. Thus, left unity approaches from the ultra-left always have the smell of "capture" about them. They work to win unity not around policies that will achieve the particular objectives of the campaign, but which will involve the imposition of their own particular line. Thus the characteristic form of left unity for ultra-leftist organisations is the front —i.e. one dominant organisation in "unity" with its own members wearing different "hats".

There are three main variants of the ultra-left approach to left unity. The first is the 4th International position, expressed in the student movement by the International Marxist Group (student membership 350, newspaper *Red Weekly*).

The IMG are not at present involved in any left unity organisation in the student movement, but desperately wish they were. Their approach, an extremely supple one, is to try and build unity on issues with any section of the left, and to introduce into that unity the tactic of the transitional demand, namely the posing of demands which "go beyond the ability of the system to satisfy" (their words). In place of their words, we would use others more blunt, i.e. demands around which it is usually impossible to mobilise more than a small minority of committed socialists and which, if adopted by the mass organisations, would divide the movement and lead it to defeat and demoralisation.

The second approach to unity are those of the RSL[4], and the Workers' Revolutionary Party (newspaper *Workers' Press*). Their approach to unity is basically to reject it. Although both organisations detest each other, they can be linked together for two main reasons. They apply the 4th International approach of posing demands far beyond the capacity of the situation to gather mass support for. This much they share with IMG, but unlike IMG, both organisations attempt to imprison left politics within the rigid organisational frameworks within which they work. The typical WRP intervention in a Union General Meeting is to call for the Student Union to support/affiliate to/send a delegate to/send money to, the particular front/conference the WRP is calling. In other words, it is continually trying to pull socialists away from left unity and bind them to its *own* political vehicle.

The RSL achieve the same result from the opposite direction. All student politics is dismissed as irrelevant unless it is expressed through the vehicle of the Labour Party, the student expression of which they claim is NOLS.

The third approach, which also sees the Broad Left as the main enemy, is that of the International Socialism Group (student membership 6-700, newspaper *Socialist Worker*). IS are the least consistent of the ultra-left groups, perhaps because they are the least Trotskyist. In the last six years they worked in, and then discarded three "rank and file"-type unity vehicles—the RSSF, the LCDSU, and, most recently, the "Socialist Alternative".

[4] All figures for student membership quoted are those given by the organisations themselves. The RSL are a secret organisation and therefore do not reveal their membership. The WRP operate openly, but are not prepared to reveal their student membership. A concensus estimate puts both in the very low hundreds.

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Similarly, they have veered from a deep immersion in student politics (outside NUS) in 1968/69, through a "workerist" phase when students were dismissed as "petty bourgeois" and now back to a more balanced assessment. In the student movement, as in those middle strata trade unions where they have gained a foothold, IS pose the "bureaucracy" as the main enemy. This appears to be the one consistency in their approach.

However, although what they describe as "the rank and file" (and also what they describe as "the bureaucracy") are characterised by different *political* trends within them, IS have consistently found it impossible to unite with any of these trends. The concept "rank and file unity" in the hands of IS is, in fact, an extremely sectarian approach based on the exclusion of all other trends. IS appear to be taking the next logical step (for them) in the student movement, namely to construct some sort of federation of "International Socialism" Societies. This approach certainly simplifies the politics of unity. IS should not have too much of a problem in uniting with themselves. The whole direction of the organisation seems to be moving in this more sectarian direction; apparently the politics of all their much-vaunted "rank and file" papers and "rank and file" conferences are going to be built much more around the *political line of IS*.

Potential for Collective Action

The politics of IS have raised an important debate among the left about the *extent* of the potential for collective action that exists in the student movement. In their 1972 pamphlet, "Students and the Struggle for Socialism", IS contested the argument that the changes wrought in the student population by the social changes and political pressures of recent years and which continue today, justify a perspective of continued mass involvement and leftward direction for the student movement. Their pamphlet argued that, because students are socially differentiated with the majority from a "petty bourgeois" background, only a minority could be won for consistent action, with the majority presumably being lost to the right. In fact, some of the statements made by leading IS students have shown them to be indifferent to the possibilities of a split of NUS into rival political federations—provided, of course, that one of them is "Marxist" (i.e. dominated by them).

It must be recognised that right-wing social and political pressure is ever present among the student population, and in a situation of social crisis will find an expression in the student movement. What IS fail to realise is that if a united left leadership works *correctly*, it is possible to *both* maintain the leftward political direction and also preserve the unity of the organisation. There is no guarantee that this will happen, but what can be said with some confidence is that if ultra-left policies and leadership are victorious in the mass organisation they are almost certain to speed the fracture IS envisage.

Why is it so important that both the leftward political direction *and* the unity of the student movement are maintained at the present time? Firstly, without the strength of a united campaigning NUS, students will lose. They will lose against the attacks on the democratic functioning of their unions. They will be unable to campaign to improve the quality of education. Although NUS does not wield power in any way comparable to that of the trade unions, its campaigns have contributed to important victories in recent years.

Secondly, a left united NUS, based on powerful democratic local unions, is able to concretely reinforce the trade union movement in its struggles now. A fragmented movement would be unable to provide such solidarity, and some of its "fragments" could provide an organisational basis for the sort of scabbing carried out by many students during the General Strike.

Most importantly, a militant united NUS will mean that new generations of students will pass through experiences of campaigning action, of organisation, of unity, of politics that can build their consciousness towards the left. This can exert incalculable influences on the political future of middle strata sections of the population, who now are many millions strong and are of great numerical, ideological and strategic significance for the working class and the anti-monopoly alliance that must be built around it.

Unlike the ultra-left organisations, the Communist Party does not see its advance being built upon the ruins of the mass organisation in which it participates. Its perspective is that this organisation should be strengthened, made more democratic, made better able to defend the interests of students. If this happens the mass organisation will both win victories now, and also create the conditions within which the political consciousness of many students can be transformed.

New Forces for the Broad Left

It is precisely because the Broad Left is the only approach to left unity in the student movement that has the perspective of advancing the mass involvement of students through a democratic, campaigning united NUS, that the right wing are so determined to smash it. What steps can be taken to strengthen the alliance?

Compared with its ultra-left opponents, the Broad Left is much larger and much broader, being an alliance rather than a front. Nevertheless, in terms of the *potential* unity of forces which can be won to identify with its approach, it is narrow indeed.

In his article on "The Communist Party and the

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Labour Party" in *Marxism Today* (January 1974), Dave Priscott wrote: "The nearest we can come to a general definition of the left in the Labour movement is that it is made up of those who have *started* to make a break with right-wing politics and leadership—sometimes at first only on one issue—and who have *started* to move to the left, to a position where they are prepared to fight on some aspect of the capitalist system". While this definition would cover an important part of the left in the student movement, it leaves out that considerable section who most definitely have made a break with right-wing politics, many of whom would claim to have adopted revolutionary positions.

The Broad Left to an extent does, and in future must increasingly, draw towards it support as it were from both "sides" of the student left—from those "breaking" with the right, and also from those who have strong commitment to socialism. This synthesis is possible because the Broad Left is not an alliance based on deep ideological unity—but on a common approach to work in the student movement by organisations and individuals who may differ on ideological issues.

The main ultra-left organisations in the student movement contest this approach of the Broad Left, both theoretically and in their practice, so it is difficult to see anything but intransigent hostility from them. However, these organisations are small, and socialists in the student movement are many.

The extent to which the Broad Left functions in an open way, and makes a strong *political* fight for leadership, will determine how many non-affiliated socialists identify with it. What is heartening is that in a number of colleges where local Broad Left groups have recently been established, often in the teeth of bitter ultra-left opposition, this process of becoming a pole of attraction to socialist students not in the ultra-left organisations has started. The process is likely to be further strengthened by the fact that IS, the largest of the ultra-left organisations, is becoming more sectarian in its approach to unity, discarding the latest of its fronts, the "Socialist Alternative".

As educational institutions grow in size (universities like Leeds and Manchester now equal small towns in populations and geographical area), and often as inter-left debates seem irrelevant to the mass of students, grave problems of democracy face the sovereign general meeting structure of student unions. In large universities, many *thousands* of students never come into the Union building, and Union General Meetings (UGMs) are often pathetically small. A key question for the Broad Left is how can it reach beyond the inner circle of "politicos" to involve leftward-moving students *from new areas* in its activities.

There are at least five major areas outside the traditional circles of student union activists, which contain the potential for united work with the Broad Left: the womens' movement in the colleges; work in the various sectors of post-school education (colleges of education, Polys, etc.); work in the faculties; an expansion in the size and influence of the Labour left; and, finally, the winning of greater involvement from overseas student organisations in this country. However, before some of these potential "growth" areas are examined, a note on a particular organisational form of "left unity", the college Socialist Society.

Frequently in the early '60s the "Labour Clubs" provided a left unity forum at college level. With the rapid discrediting of the right-wing Labour Government (in office after 1964) in the eyes of many socialist students, socialist societies, organisationally and politically separate from the Labour Party were established. When the wave of politicisation around Vietnam and other international issues erupted in 1968, it was only very partially expressed through NUS still at that time dominated by the right-wing. Then, NUS President Geoffrey Martin's famous advice to his members was to stay away from the big Vietnam solidarity demonstrations of that year and "shun foreign student agitators". One of the major political expressions of that wave of politicisation was through college socialist societies, which were at their heyday in 1968/69.

With the transformation of NUS, and most local unions, during and after 1969, and as bitter sectarian wrangles increasingly became the order of the day within the Socialist Societies, to some extent they have become a sort of historical relic of a previous era of student politics. In 1973 the existence of five separate "Soc Socs" at Bristol University, each the "property" of the various left-wing groups, typified the decline of this form of "left unity".

Local Expression in the Colleges

If it is to involve new forces, both from among the Socialist activists and from "new" areas, the Broad Left must have a local expression in the college. The form that this will take will depend on the situation; a fully constituted Broad Left Society; or a loose network of *Broad Left Journal* sellers, or even completely new ways of expressing the Broad Left approach to unity. It may take the form of a Socialist Society, especially in smaller colleges where the collective left presence may be too small to allow the luxury of interecine strife. Almost everywhere the local expression of Broad Left unity needs to be strengthened, given a regularised structure, and linked to the national network.

However, the form of the local Broad Left Group should also be determined by the tasks it aims to achieve. Because it plans to act, as well as passionately debate, it will involve those who agree

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sufficiently on their approach to reach common ground, and not those who fundamentally oppose it. On the other hand, if its sights are raised no higher than a "caucus" approach to politics, operating merely as a union "ginger group", it is unlikely to attract from both "sides" of the student left. What is required are local Broad Left Groups that combine the strengthening and support for the left in the student Union, with a preparedness to where necessary initiate action, debate and solidarity; to set up their own study groups; to produce their own local material. Only in this way can the flair and imagination of radical students, many of whom are sadly disillusioned with union politics, be won to support the Broad Left. They will not be won if the local Broad Left is just a pressure group in the Students' Union.

The women's movement has probably made more impact on the student movement than anywhere else over the last three years (although this is more a comment on the situation elsewhere than on any particular "liberated" qualities of students). In many colleges in England (though not in Scotland or Wales!) there are groups of women's movement activists. Now it is not in any way inevitable that these groups should regard themselves as allies of the Broad Left. The women's movement contains within it contradictory political trends, and some of these are likely to coincide with ultra-left politics. However, there is one stark fact which drives many women's movement activists to be potential allies of the Broad Left.

At present, women's groups often are, and feel themselves to be, embattled enclaves. To begin to influence large numbers of students the women's movement in the colleges must seek to mobilise them in action against women's oppression, must seek to win the mass organisations of the students to action on these questions and not just committed socialists—otherwise they will remain as embattled enclaves. In other words, the realities of the situation seem likely to impel many women's movement activists to recognise the need to operate a Broad Left approach to their work—and thus to become potential allies of the Broad Left.

In the same way that UGM's have often become increasingly inaccessible and unreal to huge sections of the student population in the colleges, so too have the ever-expanding NUS National Conferences reflected the over-centralisation of the fast-growing National Union. To escape this, NUS is increasingly being organised along sectoral lines, around specialist conferences involving delegates from particular types of college; those studying Education, Art, Health students, students at Polytechnics, Universities and Technical Colleges and Further Education Colleges, and Postgraduate students to list the main ones. In each of these areas there is a big potential for Broad Left Groups to be established.

If very large numbers of students do not participate in their student unions, where do they go? Most of them go to their faculties and departments to study, and with many of them what they find there they do not like. The contradictions between expectations and reality, between the desire for courses that are critical and challenging, as opposed to apologetics for imperialism; between the desires of the students (and many staff) and the requirements of State monopoly capitalism—have already been mentioned. Within these contradictions are located potentially explosive issues, and massive deeply involving campaigns. Of late, the British student movement has ignored these areas. Within the faculty, around questions of the content and relevance of education, democracy within the department, resistance to cuts in teaching and research staff, and the whole problem of assessment —here is a whole "new" area of politicisation in which the Broad Left should take initiatives, and draw new forces into its unity. The success of the Communist Universities shows the scale of interest generated by Marxist critiques of the content of traditional courses[5].

Labour Student Organisation

In a sense the greatest single reinforcement of Broad Left unity that could be achieved in the near future would be if the Labour student organisation stopped bouncing between the two grindstones between which it has been repeatedly buffeted, namely the right-wing Labour Party machine and sectarian Trotskyist groups working within the Labour students' organisation. Over the last decade, all the main ultra-left organisations have at some stage worked *within* the Labour student organisation, and at the moment the leadership position is held by the RSL, the only one to still practice "entrism".

The same disillusionment with the politics of *right* wing Labour that stripped away their student support in the late '60s still operates in the student movement, although probably to a lesser extent. The only political trend which could rally increased support to NOLS is a student expression of the *left* trend within the Labour Party. This trend is reflected to differing degrees among rank and file trade union militants who are Labour Party members, many trade union branch, district and national leaderships, by many Labour Party shop stewards, in many constituency Labour Parties, and left Labour councillors, and in Parliament by the Tribune Group of MPs. It is expressed in the student movement by "Clause Four", but at present this relatively small organisation nowhere near gathers the full potential

[5] Six hundred and thirty-two students registered for the last Communist University. Over half of them were not in the Communist Party.

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that exists. The ultra-sectarian NOLS leadership are unable to provide the sort of approach which could gather it. Put quite simply, if Clause Four defeated the RSL in NOLS the Broad Left could be greatly strengthened.

A cause of bafflement to many outside the student movement (and to not a few within it) is why so much political work among the student left, ostensibly carried out in the name of unity, is nonetheless characterised by such a sectarian "style". Undoubtedly, many on the left (including a few within the Broad Left) have a tendency to regard other left groups as the main enemy! However, because of the "dual" nature of the student left, including those "making a break with the right", to use Dave Priscott's term, as well as those who consider themselves to be committed socialists—a combination not found on the same scale anywhere else; the Broad Left must fight politically to win both "sides". Inevitably, this means that it must present its politics in an extremely polemical way.

The Communist Party and the Broad Left

One of the main points of difference between the ultra-leftist approaches to unity and a Marxist-Leninist approach, which I would claim the Communist Party attempts to follow in the student movement, is around the question of *levels* of struggle. This article has distinguished four separate organisational/political levels—the student population; the mass student movement which is increasingly expressed through NUS and the student unions; the Broad Left, which I have described as a driving force for this movement. To these three must be added a fourth—the role of the revolutionary party.

An ultra-leftist approach, especially in its Trotskyist form, would tend to compress these levels together. Thus, the IS, discovering that "united" work with rival ultra-left organisations conflicts with their other objectives, are increasingly turning their "rank and file" unity vehicles into fronts, as the WRP and the RSL have continually done. Thus, in their scenario, two levels merge—the unity organisation and the "revolutionary" party.

In the demands these groups put before the student movement, and seek to win it to adopt, they attempt an even more drastic merging. Because only a small minority of socialist students will support the advanced demands their Trotskyist over-estimation of the situation leads them to pose, in effect they blur the distinction between the student movement *and the left*. This reaches its most extreme and unreal position with the WRP, who fence off their activities into political and organisational enclaves which attempt to compress *three* separate levels into one—that of revolutionary party, left unity, and mass organisation—thus in the trade union movement the "all trades union alliance" and in the student movement the "Young Socialist Student Societies".

The relationship of the revolutionary party to genuine left unity must be the very opposite of this. It must respect, and indeed be committed to fight for, the autonomy of the Broad Left from its own existence. Its leadership should be expressed, not through packing meetings or more effective caucussing, but by winning political support for its arguments in an open and democratic way.

The Communist Party recognises both the *separateness* of these differing levels of struggle and their *interconnection*. Therefore, the policy for which the party campaigns in the student movement aims at the mobilisation, not just of committed socialists, but of the widest possible number of students. On occasions this may mean that the party argues against policies, apparently militant and left, but which it believes will make it more difficult to involve the widest possible numbers of students in collective action. It is not that the party is against these policies on principle; more clearly than anyone in the left, Communists recognise that ultimately the problems facing students will only be solved by socialist revolution.

But also, more clearly than anyone else on the left, the party realises that people are won to recognise the need for revolution, by a *combination* of two *separate* but *interconnected* elements—participation in militant collective action, that opens up (but does not make inevitable) all manner of deep political lessons—and effect of propaganda, argumentation and education that *links* the politicising experience through which people pass, to the need for a revolutionary change in society.

Thus, the other side of the coin to the party's deep involvement in the separate but interconnected levels of the student movement and the Broad Left must be a great emphasis on the revolutionary Marxism of its own analysis. Unless these two approaches are linked, the work of the revolutionary party will degenerate into either economism or impotent sectarianism. In the student movement, where the left also includes considerable numbers who would consider themselves to be Marxists, as well as the very much larger number breaking with right-wing policies, it is of particular importance that the work of the party is on *both* fronts. To win those who consider themselves Marxists, we must continually justify our work in the various levels of the student movement, in relation to our revolutionary objectives.

The Student Movement Leadership and the Broad Left

Although students cannot be considered part of the working class, and the student unions must not be equated with trade unions, there is value in

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applying Lenin's analysis of conflicting right and left trends within the British Labour movement to the student movement, and to its mass organisation the NUS. Of course, it is important to recognise that because NUS is not a socially homogeneous *class* organisation, the left-right trends will take different forms. Lenin's analysis was that in the mass organisations of the working class was a political conflict between the right wing in the ascendant, and a left trend, often confused, not yet firmly anchored in Marxism, which challenged the dominant right. In the debate around the formation of the British Communist Party, Lenin's advice to British revolutionaries was that it was at the heart of this left trend that the revolutionary party should locate itself.

Lenin described the left-right conflict as a *political* one between two opposing *political* trends. This is in sharp contrast to the non-Leninist analysis of the IS, who confuse this political conflict into one between two sociological categories, "the bureaucracy" and "the rank and file".

Now it is sometimes the case that trade union (and student union) leaderships are both bureaucratic and right wing, and Lenin pointed out with vivid clarity why this combination *often* went together. He did not say that it inevitably did. What has happened in the student movement over recent years is that the left trend has won the ascendancy, and therefore it expresses itself both among the rank and file students *and among their leadership*.

Therefore, a vital role for the Broad Left is to strengthen the links between these two expressions, using the one to sustain and advance the other and, where necessary, to criticise the other. We must never forget that the pressures which bureaucratise leaderships are very real.

In this way, the *united* strength of the student movement can be mobilised. This does not mean that the Broad Left merely coat-tail Broad Left supporters on the NUS Executive, merely rubber stamping their initiatives (NUS Executive is responsible for its mandates to NUS Conference). On the contrary—what must be achieved are structures within the Broad Left which involve all its component parts, and which facilitate discussion and criticism, so that a common approach can be agreed. This is where regular Broad Left Conferences have such an important role to play—they provide just such an arena.

In this article, I have tried to outline what I believe should be the approach of the Communist Party to left unity in the student movement. On occasions, the revolutionary party must take a critical stance to those with whom it is in alliance, although it is of great importance that these differences are expressed in an open and comradely way. On other occasions, it will unite, usually only on specific issues, with groups claiming to be to its "left".

But the central emphasis of its work in the student movement must be to strengthen the ongoing alliance of those forces which share a common perspective for the mass movement, and at the same time expand and enrich its Marxist ideological work, and to increase its size, because without this growth students involved in the militant collective action that Broad Left policies and leadership make possible are unlikely to become Marxist-Leninists.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND MILITARY COUPS.

E. J. Hobsbawm.

(We print below the text of a talk given by Professor Hobsbawm in May of this year to the Birkbeck College Socialist Society)

The role of the military in politics used to be a subject discussed only by those who took an interest in such parts of the world as Latin America, where it is still, God knows, a topical subject. Today, it is clear that it concerns us all. Independent military intervention in politics is always a sign of crisis. It is a symptom of social and political failure. In developed countries it is a symptom of the breakdown of the normal process of politics, or a sign that the *status quo* can no longer contain disruptive or revolutionary pressures. In the Third World it is a fairly safe symptom of an incomplete or aborted revolution. Well, we are in such a situation of breakdown even in many developed countries, including possibly ours.

It is assumed—especially on the left—that

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military intervention, and especially the military coup which is its most dramatic and successful form, always runs in only one political direction: towards the right. This is not the case. Military coups come in all shapes and sizes, not merely the frankly counter-revolutionary. The two recent ones, which will be most familiar to newspaper readers, are the Chilean and the Portuguese. Their political character is obviously very different indeed, whatever the long-term perspectives of Portuguese politics should turn out to be. One banned all parties and unions, massacred and jailed militants of the left, and seems inspired by a corporatist-fascist ideology; the other legalized parties and unions and introduced Communists into the government—very nearly the *only* Communists in the government of any non-socialist country in the world today.

The purpose of my talk tonight is not so much to point this out, as to consider the relations between labour movements and the military, especially in conditions of a peaceful or constitutional progress towards socialism. To avoid any misunderstanding, let me repeat the obvious: most armed forces at most times are likely to intervene against rather than for revolution, if they intervene at all. Most armed forces are likely to be quite out of sympathy with labour and progressive governments.

Some people take the view that this means that no labour and progressive government can do anything to bring a socialist transformation nearer by peaceful and constitutional means, because if it tries the armed forces will not let it. Or alternatively that the only thing such a government can do is to mobilise the people for a revolutionary confrontation with the armed forces, which amounts to saying the same thing. I do not wish to discuss the complex and difficult problems of the nature of a transition to socialism. I will merely say that all mass labour movements I am acquainted with anywhere in the non-socialist world face the problem of coexisting with the armed forces, and so do all labour and progressive governments, mostly with unsympathetic ones. That's what they have got to live with. And the main problem before us is to understand this situation. I wish to make a number of observations about it.

I.

Against Revolutionary Romanticism

My first observation is discouraging but unquestionably true. Under normal circumstances the armed forces of practically any State are amply sufficient to defeat riot or insurrection or to avoid being defeated by them; that is, so long as there is no revolutionary or para-revolutionary situation, in which the unity of the armed forces and the ruling classes which give them their orders are critically undermined. Under certain conditions the armed forces created by insurrectionaries can establish themselves and even advance, though I cannot think of any recent cases in which guerilla insurrections of this kind have been *successful* without the presence of two factors: *first*, that the enemy is a foreigner (by colour, language, religion or some other accepted criterion) and *second*, the presence of a friendly frontier across which supply or retreat is possible. But even under optimum conditions, it is rare that the enemy is defeated by *purely* military means; so rare that the case can be neglected.

The object of even protracted guerilla warfare, whatever the official theory says, is not military but political: to create the conditions in which the will of the enemy to continue fighting is broken, not because his troops have lost their physical superiority, but because they disintegrate politically, with the crisis and splits within their ruling class, or—as in the case of foreign imperialism—because the domestic political cost of continuing to fight is too high. The first happened in China and Cuba, the second in Algeria, in Vietnam, in Portuguese Africa and it may happen in Ireland. In these cases, of course, the military mobilisation may be very substantial. Normally, it need not be. The British army which kept order in the North in the first phase of Chartism (1839) consisted of 5,000 men, and during the most acute phase of Chartism in 1842 did not exceed 10,000 men in the whole country. The Chilean forces which made the coup in 1973 were probably 90,000 strong in a country of eleven millions, and stretching over 2,000 miles in length.

I make this point in order to demystify the revolutionary romanticism of barricades, bombs and portable missile throwers which is at present in vogue. Barricades have never been of great military importance, as Engels knew and said: their significance is political. "Arming the workers" is a good agitational slogan, and of course crucial in revolutionary situations, but in non-revolutionary ones it does not begin to offset the power of official armed force, and may be an invitation to disaster. Lenin knew what he meant when he warned against "playing with insurrection".

The Chilean Coup

I will merely illustrate this by reference to the Chilean coup of September 1973. Such a coup was always regarded as possible, and in the last year of the Allende government as probable. Measures to counter it had been taken, not merely by the ultra-left, but by the government itself and the parties of the Popular Unity, notably the CP; including arming the workers, insofar as this was possible under the hostile eyes of the armed forces. Allende and the CP knew well enough that this was not enough. They did not rely merely on the constitutionalism of the high command, which was expected to remain loyal to the properly elected government

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of the State, but attempted to make it clear from the outset that the government would never abdicate to a coup, but resist it by arms—hoping that the army would hesitate before the unpredictable prospect of a civil war.

But they also knew that this threat might be insufficient, and therefore tried at all costs to avoid an armed confrontation which they would lose. The ultra-left (chiefly the MIR and the left socialists) probably also knew that barricades, workers' militias and a few unofficial armed units were no match for the armed forces, though they probably held excessively optimistic views about the prospects of continuing resistance by guerilla tactics, which they have now formally abandoned, at least inside Chile. However, they assumed that the situation was sufficiently revolutionary for the army to split, either in the form of a refusal of the ranks to obey orders (as happened in Petrograd in February 1917) or in the form of some units of armed forces and police remaining loyal to the government (as happened in Spain in 1936).

In other words, they also put their money on a coup turning into a civil war. But in fact they totally miscalculated the political situation. The army coup did not lead to civil war. The loyal officers and men were arrested, killed or otherwise immobilised. There was sporadic armed resistance, but not enough to delay the effective military takeover for more than a few days. In short, they provoked not a confrontation which the left had even a sporting chance of winning, but total catastrophe. And, I may add, that the present policy of all the left, including the MIR within Chile, is essentially a return to the old Broad Front policy of Allende—the alliance of all forces hostile to the military, including the Christian Democrats. Only today it is no longer conducted under conditions of legal mass politics, and still less under conditions of a progressive government controlling at least some of the levers of power, but by decimated groups of illegal cadres, hunted and powerless.

Engels once observed (in the light of the 1848 revolutions) that "it is an evident fact that the disorganization of armies and the total dissolution of discipline is both a condition and a consequence of every revolution that has been victorious to date" (Engels to Marx, 26 September 1851). We need not accept this literally to recognize the core of truth in the observation. The crucial factor in revolutions is not military but political. If the political conditions are right, the military ones become more manageable. This does not exclude helping to create or precipitate the political conditions by military action in certain cases of the kind I mentioned in passing above. There is, of course, also the possibility of revolutions being victorious by the direct or indirect intervention of foreign armies on their behalf, but in the present period of history we can exclude this possibility. Intervention on behalf of counter-revolution is very much more likely, and has indeed frequently happened.

"Let Them Never Be Underrated"

The moral of my argument so far is that armed forces, even quite small and not notably efficient armed forces, cannot be wished into insignificance. They appear to be less formidable and decisive in revolutionary situations, because such situations are characterized, as Lenin observed, not only by a breakdown in the normal obedience of the masses and an increase in their independent activity, but also—and Lenin mentions this high up in his list—"when there is a crisis in one form or another among the 'upper classes', a crisis in the policy of the ruling class which causes fissures". This affects the forces of coercion and may paralyse them. But let them never be underrated. The Tupamaros in Uruguay, who were a very serious professional body of revolutionaries, thought they were doing fine because they had more or less got the measure of the ordinary police under normal political conditions. As soon as the army decided to intervene without normal legality, the Tupamaros soon discovered the limits of their own forces. They are still in existence, so far as one can tell, but nobody has heard much of their activities since the army took over.

Of course, we may beg the question by saying that it is the job of socialists to create revolutionary conditions, in which case the problem of the armed forces will become less unmanageable. But in the first place, as my illustrations have already suggested, quite a few movements have already miscalculated the probability of revolutionary situations, to their cost. Perhaps, I would suggest, because they had too much confidence in *creating* or at least *precipitating* revolutionary conditions by voluntary action. In the second place, we live in one of a very important group of countries in which revolutionary situations of the Russian type or of the Chinese type are rather unlikely. Situations of economic and political breakdown are, if anything, more likely to produce counter-revolutionary situations, as they did in Germany during the slump of the early 1930s. We are stuck with the prospect of trying to get towards socialism by some other kind of strategy. And the armed forces will be there while we are trying to do it.

II.

Politics of the Armed Forces

The second point I wish to make concerns the politics of the armed forces, i.e. of the officer corps (I will confine myself to these, since for various reasons the politics of the police are somewhat different). The conventional wisdom of the ultra-revolutionary left on this subject consists of two

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propositions: (1) they are the loyal strong arm of the ruling classes, and as such will forcibly prevent any serious challenge to the social system; (2) insofar as they do not share the political views of their civilian masters, they stand further to the right. And, of course, both propositions are true enough, as a rule. In stable bourgeois régimes officers obey the orders of governments, even when most of them hold opinions considerably to the right of them, and talk with contempt about them in their messes. When they intervene, it is usually to install governments to the right of bourgeois liberal democracy, though this may partly be because the very fact of a military coup lies outside the scope of bourgeois democracy.

Nevertheless, this stereotype is not always correct. It is worth pointing out, however briefly and incidentally to my argument, that the idea of army officers as a homogeneous reactionary bloc is mistaken; that there have been officer corps whose political ideology has been radical, 'progressive' or at any rate distinctly to the left of their civilian masters; and that military coups and military régimes are by no means invariably right-wing. I do not claim that this is very common, but even the single example of the Portuguese coup demonstrates that this possibility is not politically negligible either. Naturally, I do not wish to suggest either that socialists can safely have confidence in the politics of the Portuguese or any other military junta. Actually, no civilians are ever wise to have confidence in the politics of any army: when they have to rely on it, it is because they can do little else. Socialist régimes have been passionately committed to civilian supremacy, even against their own revolutionary armies (except, perhaps—temporarily—in China after the Cultural Revolution). But bourgeois politicians of right, left or centre have also had a very strong prejudice in favour of armies which obey the orders of their civilian masters and then go back to their barracks.

Over-simplified Model

What I wish to query, therefore, is not, in the concrete situation of the developed industrial countries, that the armed forces stand on the political right. The last military coup in France (1958) was in no sense 'progressive', and if ever such a thing happened in Britain, it is a safe bet that it would not have the political complexion the Portuguese has so far shown. I wish rather to criticise the grossly over-simplified model of the relationship between army, government and ruling class. I want to do so by considering some concrete examples, which are unfortunately not so remote from potential British reality today, for one important reason. The armed forces in Britain today are once again acquiring a major function in the maintenance of 'order' at home, such as they did not have for about a century after Chartism; though, of course, they had such a function abroad, including Ireland. Broadly speaking, until the development of the police in the decades after 1829, the army and armed para-military organisations of the upper classes such as the "yeomanry", were the only forces capable of defending public order against riot or insurrection. For about a century after the development of effective police-forces (which took place in the decades after 1829) the police handled virtually the entire problem of public order. The army was held in reserve, and used only very exceptionally and reluctantly, except—from the First World War on—for a special purpose which did not involve direct coercion, namely selected strike-breaking.

Of course, this might involve the protection of the uniformed strike-breakers against others, but the fact remains that soldiers unloading ships in a dock strike or trying to run a power station are acting not as a force of coercion but as a labour-force which has to obey orders, or at least which is much more likely to than the strikers. But it is unfortunately no longer the case that the maintenance of public order is left entirely to the police. Since Britain has not developed a para-military riot police the role of the army is likely to increase markedly once again, and, as you know, there have already been discussions within army circles about this, e.g. by Brigadier Michael Kitson. I would guess that there has also been a lot of contingency planning. And, not only in Ulster but also in some anti-terrorist exercises in this country, there has been practical execution of such plans.

Army, *Government and Ruling Classes*

I want to make a few propositions about the relationship between army, government and ruling classes. The first is so obvious that it hardly needs much argument: the officer corps is not simply the ruling class in uniform, or a section of it. Some of them used to be, but that was a hangover of pre-industrial aristocratic society—I won't say feudal society—and it is no longer very important. Most German generals are no longer Junkers, nor does a disproportionate number of French ones still come from Catholic royalist "good families" with a *particule*. It is no longer enough to think of British officers as figures out of P. G. Wodehouse, though I daresay there are still a lot of them. The officer corps, whatever its social origins, is increasingly a technical profession. The point of this observation is not to deny that it identifies itself with the middle classes or even, in the Household Brigade, with the aristocracy, but that its specialised professional interests may be at variance with those of other groups.

This professionalisation, or this separation of the army from the rest of society, is intensified in those

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countries in which conscription has been abolished, and therefore not only the officers but the ranks are professional soldiers. I mention this point because it has great political significance. The traditional preference of socialists was always for an army of civilians in uniform—i.e. universal military service—because they might reasonably be expected to react like civilians. And so they might. The crucial example is the defeat of the coup of the Algerian officers in 1961, which failed to a large extent because the rankers remained loyal to the civilian government in Paris (i.e. General de Gaulle) when he appealed to them. (The fact that they had transistor radios made it more difficult to cut them off from the government.)

Another obvious example is the Vietnam war. American conservatives have pointed out quite correctly that it was a basic error to wage this war with conscripts, who didn't like it and only wanted to go home or stay out. Now a professional army is not immune to the appeal of the civilian population, insofar as its ranks consist largely of workers, who join because they can't get proper jobs outside. The radical press of 19th-century Britain was widely read by rankers, and always made it a point to air their grievances. But it is undoubtedly much more easy to isolate, especially when (like today) it is offered reasonable wages rather than the traditional pittance. The more the army becomes a series of specialised and well-paid élite groups—parachutists are a good example—the less "civilian" their reactions are likely to be.

The second observation I want to make is that the army differs from other bodies of public servants inasmuch as it is increasingly an all-purpose body. As the Ulster case today demonstrates, it does not merely maintain public order, but is designed—within limits—to replace civilian activities: transport, communications, the supply of public utilities, perhaps the distribution of goods, and whatever else. Even if it can only do so to a limited extent and in brief emergencies, this still makes it potentially a much more dangerous force than ever before. In the last analysis it can "take over" almost anything—but only within narrowly defined limits.

Loyalty to Constituted Government

The third point I want to make is that, in politically stable societies, it is usually loyal to the constituted government (I am not speaking of countries in which military coups have become a way of life). There are numerous reasons for this, but the fact remains. It is often said that the armed forces would never permit a major social change, such as a government which embarks upon a socialist transformation. This may be so, but before we jump to this conclusion, let us remember one thing. What constitutes a "major social change" is a very subjective matter. Armies have kept quiet when faced with social and political changes which their officers (and the bourgeoisie) certainly regarded with horror, abomination and fear, such as the French Popular Front of 1936. (I know it was not, but that was not the feeling among the French middle class at the time.) Conversely, armies have revolted when faced with what, on the face of it, was a relatively moderate political development, such as the Spanish Popular Front of 1936. They are today overthrowing governments which are far from socialist or even threatening civil power. The fact that armies put down *rebellions*—even rebellions with which you and I would sympathise—is quite another matter. That is their business, if the government orders them to. General Napier in 1839 maintained order without hesitation against the Chartists, though he personally believed that

> "the people should have universal suffrage—it is their right. The ballot is their security and their will and therefore their right also." (Church, Nottg., p. 147)

they normally regard it as their duty to carry out the commands of the legitimate government, whether or not they agree with it.

When the Military Act on Their Own

The military have generally acted on their own, and against the government, chiefly in a few specifiable circumstances, among which I will mention the following:

A. When the normal processes of politics break down for one reason or another. I won't go into this at length, but the fact that the classical system of bourgeois-democratic politics is today showing signs of breakdown in its most traditional strongholds—such as Britain—is a real danger signal. For the first time, military intervention in countries such as ours can no longer be totally dismissed from the realm of what is politically possible. If this occurs at a time of social crisis, the risk becomes greater. It becomes even greater if combined with the second situation. This is:

B. When their specific interests and deepest feelings as a professional group are apparently jeopardized and outraged by a government, for one reason or another. The standard example is that of an army—preferably one whose self-confidence has already been undermined—which is fighting a war it believes to be totally mismanaged by the civilian government. The coups of the French army in 1958 and 1961 were made by a force which believed that the civilians had messed up the Algerian war, as they had messed up the Vietnam war, and also that, but for this incompetence and half-heartedness, they could win it. The German army tried a coup in July 1944 because it knew the war was lost and, if

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carried on along Hitler's lines, would lead to total disaster. The Portuguese army clearly also rebelled because it made its government responsible for getting it into an unwinnable war for which it would get the blame. If there is a risk of military intervention in this country, it will come primarily from a very similar reaction by the British army against the incompetence, half-heartedness and general balls-up made by shortsighted and vacillating civilians in Ulster. It won't be the first time that the Irish question has created a crisis in British politics.

C. When what is called "law and order" break down. Now "law and order" is probably the most powerful conservative slogan there is, and all armed forces of states are by definition as well as by predilection conservative institutions. But it is so powerful a conservative slogan because it welds two quite distinct ideas into a single whole, which is very hard to divide: the fact that most people feel disoriented, insecure, threatened or even afraid in conditions of what one might call colloquially, chaos and disorder, anyway if these are too prolonged; and second, the fact that the conditions of ordered life happen in stable societies to be the conditions of a particular form of class rule. To want "law and order" in British conditions is to want capitalist law and order; to want them in the USSR is to support the Soviet government. But the point is that the demand for "order" is not necessarily one for *capitalist* order, except of course by the capitalists. For most people, including a lot of workers, it is just the fear of avoidable insecurity, uncertainty, and general chaos and breakdown. Of course, this does not always prevail; if it did there would never be revolutions or mass movements against the *status quo*. Of course, "order" is also a relative term, and varies in different societies and periods. But the force of the slogan remains. In extreme cases it may be sufficient to maintain a totally unacceptable régime in power, simply because the worst effective government is better than the alternative of chaos or civil war. This Hobbesian argument probably saved General Franco in the years after 1944, at a time when his régime probably had very little support and very little strength. Armies faced with the breakdown of order may well be tempted to intervene to re-establish it, without necessarily being committed to any particular type of order.

D. What is perhaps the most dangerous situation: armies may intervene if they are expected to take sides politically. The Chilean situation seems to me to illustrate this. There is no real doubt that the Chilean armed forces were perfectly loyal to the constitutional government to start with. In fact, without their loyalty—their defeat of the right-wing officers who wanted to make a coup—Allende would never have come into office in 1970. There is also no doubt that their commanders remained loyal for a very long time, through a period of rapid and drastic changes by a government which made no bones of its intention to construct a socialist society.

No doubt, sooner or later a confrontation was likely. All revolutions have sooner or later abolished the old armed forces and created new ones, and had Allende done so this would have led to trouble. But there was no reason to expect this within three years. What turned the army into a counter-revolutionary force was the alienation of vast bodies of the originally neutral or even vaguely favourable middle strata from the Allende régime. When this happened, and the general strikes of the small lorry owners, shopkeepers, etc., forced Allende to call upon the army, actually to ask the army to keep the economy going, the situation was changed. The armed forces were no longer merely there to keep order on behalf of a constitutional government going about its business, of which they might or might not approve. They were expected to become active agents of that government's policy, i.e. to join one side in a deeply divided country. It is not surprising that, being asked to choose, they chose the side with which most officers sympathized rather than the one with which they did not. The crucial fact about the Chilean coup was not that armies always make coups against socialist governments, but that a minority government which splits the country down the middle is unwise to expect the armed forces to pull its chestnuts out of the fire for it, merely on the strength of being constitutionally elected. Especially if, like the Allende government, you have made a mess of the economic situation. In fact, we are back at the point I mentioned in my first section: if one goes for the politics which make sense in a revolutionary situation, one must be sure that there is such a situation. If not, one must, like it or not, recognize the limitations of what can be done in the short run. This does not automatically mean that a peaceful road to socialism is impossible. It merely means that such a road may be protracted and complex, even after socialist governments have taken office; or even power.

However, the basic fact remains that in stable political societies the armed forces are normally loyal and keep out of politics. They do their job and let the government get on with its job. And in such societies that job includes economic, social and political change, even of a kind which most officers don't like. The French army since 1799 has remained loyal to every government that looked like being the effective and legitimate national government through two kinds of monarchy, two empires, and four republics—with the exception of the period of the Algerian war, which I have already discussed. Conversely, if the army intervenes, it is by no means only against socialist governments or the threat of working-class power.

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III.

The Favourite Formula

I began by saying that outside revolutionary or similar situations the idea that the armed forces can simply be got out of the way is Utopian. And we are bound to admit that they are quite likely to intervene against progressive or socialist governments, or against others, though by no means certain to; and that their intervention in most of Europe is likely to be on the right-wing side. Furthermore, that, with the general crisis of the bourgeois-democratic systems of rule today, and of the capitalist economy, such interventions are becoming less improbable. There is no denying that the favourite formula for the defence of capitalism today is not so much fascism as in the 1930s, as an administration of technocrats liberated from all constraints by military dictatorship—the Greek or Brazilian formula. What recourse have we against this possibility?

Limits of Army Intervention

Not children's games with bombs and guns. But there are, in fact, two recent examples which show the limits of army intervention. They are the Argentine and Ulster. In the first case a military régime, installed in 1955, proved unable in the long run to maintain itself because it was quite unable to destroy a strong and organized mass movement whose core lay in the organized labour and trade union movement, i.e. the industrial working class: Peronism. No permanent government was possible without and against the Peronists, even though they were excluded from elections. In the end, Peron had to be allowed back.

In the second case, a general strike of the Protestant workers was so formidable that the army itself advised against intervention, and was not very successful when it did. I am not discussing the political complexion of these curious labour movements—that of the Peronists has been much debated, that of the Orangemen is unfortunately only too clear. I am pointing out that a really solid Labour movement *representing a very large common class front* is a very formidable proposition for any army to tackle. To resist it, it is not necessary for such a movement to *fight* the army. Indeed, the Ulster Protestants have been careful (and sensible) enough not to do so.

But for the working class to resist army intervention, and indeed hopefully to stop the attempt being made at all, it must be solid; it must be united and disciplined. It must be ready for action, and —I repeat—*it must enjoy the sympathy, if not the active support, of the majority of the rest of the population.*

Importance of Unity

So let me conclude. What light does all this throw on the prospects of a transition to a socialist society under peaceful and constitutional conditions? I believe it underlines the importance of maintaining both unity and the broadest possible front of support. This may mean what the Italian Communists now call an "historic compromise"—i.e. governing down the pace of social change to what is acceptable to the potential allies or the potential neutrals among the middle strata. The working-class movement, the core of a labour and progressive government, must be seen as the representative and leader of the nation against the chief enemies of progress who must be isolated as much as possible. This is not necessarily a choice of "reformism" over "revolution".

The alternative, to provoke division and confrontation, may not get the movement further forward, but lead it into catastrophe and, what is more, make even the subsequent illegal struggle more difficult. In Chile, many of the leaders of the left after the coup were turned in to the fascist government *by their neighbours*—by men and women who had been so antagonized that they provided a mass basis for the coup, however temporary. To this day, as I was recently told, it is risky for someone even to type out a stencil in their private room at night: someone in the apartment above or below is quite likely to ring up the police, because what business has a law-abiding citizen to be typing at night?

Nor is it necessarily an *alternative* to mobilizing the masses. It may be a necessary stage in doing so.

There is a final point, which may reflect the historic scepticism of someone who remembers the last great crisis of capitalism. Now, as then, I do not believe that the labour and socialist movement is on the offensive. It is on the defensive against the forces of reaction, which find it increasingly necessary to weaken it, perhaps even to smash it, if they are to solve the crisis of the capitalist economy in a capitalist way. In such a situation it is all the more necessary to isolate the main enemy and to avoid being isolated by him. The strategy of the united front, the people's front, the national front was elaborated to meet such a situation. It is more difficult and perhaps less promising today, for various reasons, but it is the best we have. And perhaps I may remind you that such a strategy in the past did not remain defensive, but contained the possibilities of advance: it led into the resistance movements, into the only major armed popular struggles that have taken place in industrially developed countries, and closer to revolutionary transformations than any other strategy of the left in western Europe.

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SIR KARL POPPER - DOCTRINAIRE ANTI-MARXIST.

Maurice Cornforth.

Sir Karl Popper's name is well known for his contributions to the philosophy of science. And with him this philosophy, supposedly a very dispassionate topic, has been linked with a violent and even rabid anti-sovietism and anti-communism which he has sought to justify in terms of his theories about science.

Popper's theories about science and scientific method have acquired almost the status of a "cult" among many younger scientists and intellectuals. And many have been deceived as a result into believing his claims that he has achieved at last the final and decisive refutation of Marxism and everything it stands for.

Popper's Arguments against Marxism

Popper has argued against Marxism from two levels. He has argued at the level of his sociological and political theories and from the level of his philosophy of science.

At the level of sociological theory, he has argued against what he calls "historicism". By this he means the idea that from knowledge of a process of historical development one may confidently make "unconditional" predictions as to its future. For the whole historical process is thought to move into its predestined future with the inexorability of fate. Popper alleges that, as "historicists", Marxists conceive of the Communist Party as the chosen instrument of Fate, and of the general secretary of the Party as the chosen Man of Destiny.

Historicism, he says, leads to "utopianism"—the idea that the future order of society will be brought into being corresponding to a kind of preconceived blue print of what it has to be like. And in this connection he contrasts what he calls "utopian" with "piecemeal social engineering". By "social engineering" he means action to bring about changes in the institutions of society. The "utopian" social engineer is a violent fellow who proposes to destroy existing institutions, root and branch, in order to build in their place the promised utopia. The "piecemeal" social engineer, on the other hand, sets about making little reforms one by one in the existing institutions.

Popper's sociological theories are, in effect, theories of how to carry on "piecemeal social engineering"—or, in other words, of how *not* to upset the existing capitalist Establishment.

At the level of the philosophy of science, Popper then argues for the rigorous procedures of scientific method in all theorising, as against what he calls "essentialism" and "dogmatism". Essentialism is the belief that by some grandiose effort of theoretical generalisation one may grasp the "essence" of whatever one is interested in—and then everything one can wish to know about it is deducible from the knowledge of its "essence".

He is, of course, quite right in opposing scientific method to "essentialism", so defined—just as he is quite right to oppose "historicism", as he defines it. The point is, however, that he accuses Marxism of violating scientific method in favour of "essentialism" and "historicism".

Popper and Traditional Positivism

I shall begin criticism of Popper's views at the second level, that of his theories about scientific method, his philosophy of science.

Popper's philosophy of science starts by criticising and opposing the traditional theory about scientific method, according to which science proceeds by first gathering in a lot of reports of "observations" and then making "inductions" from them. This theory may be succinctly labelled "positivist".

Put very briefly and crudely, the traditional positivist idea about science may be expressed as follows. In a whole set of observations things exhibiting an observed character "A" are observed to exhibit also the character "B": the scientist then arrives by induction at the scientific theory that "All A is B". Or again, in a more complex and typical case, only those A's which are also C's exhibit the character "B": the inductive conclusion is then that "If A is C it is also B".

Popper has the merit of opposing the traditional positivist theory of induction. He has pointed out that, on the contrary, science begins not with sets of observations but with *problems*. The scientist always tackles a *problem*—and such observations as he

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makes are devised as having a bearing on the solution of the problem. The whole idea that science is based simply on reports of "given" observations is, says Popper, false. Science is always *active*. It does not start with anything "given", but by propounding a problem which it then actively seeks the means to solve.

Popper has then pointed out, secondly, the role of active imagination in science—as opposed to the merely passive acceptance of "data" from observation and mere "induction" from the given data.

Thirdly, he has then pointed out that what is characteristic of science is that in actively thinking up theories by the aid of which to solve problems, it always devises ways and means of subjecting such theories to the most rigorous empirical or observational *tests*.

Hence, putting it very simply, the traditional positivist view of science says that science goes like this: Observations — Inductive Theories — More Observations — More Inductive Theories. . . . Popper, on the other hand, says it goes rather like this: Problem — Imaginative Theory — Tests of the Theory — More Problems — More Imaginative Theory — More Tests. . . .

The "Criterion" of Scientific Theory

Having thus, in opposition to traditional positivism, rendered what he considers to be (and undoubtedly is) a truer account of scientific method, Popper proceeds to propound what he considers to be the key question for the whole philosophy of science.

Just as science proceeds by tackling problems so, according to him, must the philosophy of science be developed by tackling problems. The first thing is to formulate the problems. And this he does by proceeding from the one key question—What is the *criterion* to distinguish scientific from unscientific theory?

This, it may be said, is a good question.

But yet in the way he formulates it, it conceals the most misleading implications. If, as Popper says, one should start from questions, then it is surely important to formulate the questions correctly. But he has hardly done that in making the whole philosophy of science an answer to this one question he has chosen to ask. For the question contains the implication that there is one "criterion" the application of which to any theory at once supplies a clear "yes" or "no" answer as to whether that theory is or is not "scientific".

But as actually propounded by real living people who are trying to solve their problems, theories are pretty complex things.

God on the Day of Judgment will, as theologians assure us, have his "criterion" cut and dried to separate the sheep from the goats, the elect from the damned. But even God may be presumed to meet with some puzzles due to the admixture of good and bad in the candidates for his judgment.

Popper wants to be like God separating scientific from unscientific theories. He has got his work cut out in view of the admixture of scientific and unscientific elements in so many theories.

Scientific Theory and Scientific Activity

A second, and more fundamental, objection to Popper's question is that in making this the key question for the philosophy of science he has tacitly agreed to treat science simply as "scientific theory".

But *is* science the same thing as "scientific theory"?

This is a question Popper would have been well advised to ask. And the answer, as any competent Marxist could tell him, is that it is *not*.

For *science* is not just a collection of theories but a social activity. The development of science is not just a development of theories but a social-historical development.

This has been amply demonstrated, for example, in the work of J. D. Bernal, contemporary with Popper, in his great books *The Social Function of Science* and *Science in History*. Calling science "an institution" rather than "a theory", and concentrating attention on its social function, Bernal showed that science is a theory-making and theory-using social activity, elaborately institutionalised in its development, and serving not simply to provide theories but to get things done.

The social nature of science was, indeed, already understood and expounded by Marx himself, in the third volume of *Capital*. Marx there called attention to the distinction in industrial production between what he termed "co-operative labour"—which is the labour of the production-workers themselves working together in workshops—and "universal labour", which is the work of providing essential theory and know-how for that co-operative labour. Science, he explained, develops as "universal labour". He therefore categorised science as "a productive force" in society—and added the pregnant statement that in capitalist society it becomes a productive force separated from the workers and "pressed into the service of capital".

This implies that the workers should proceed to take this productive force of science under their own control and press it into service for the general welfare of society. This is, indeed, what is now being done in the socialist countries. But any such proposal is abhorrent to Popper, who thinks that scientific theories are the sole concern of a scientific elite who, with disinterested judgment, apply their "criterion" to distinguish scientific theories from unscientific ones.

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No Break with Positivism

While, then, Popper *begins* by opposing traditional positivist theory about science, his break with positivism turns out to be no real break with its fundamental attitudes. It is still a positivist view of science. For fundamental in the positivist view is the treatment of science as simply "scientific theory", and the problems of the philosophy of science as problems simply about "scientific theory".

Popper gives what may be called an improved version of positivist theory by his insistence that scientific theory is not arrived at simply by inductions from observations. So far, so good. But it is only an improvement—a sort of piecemeal theoretical engineering applied in the context of the same old philosophy of science.

Marxism breaks with positivist philosophy of science in a radical way—by understanding science as social activity, and scientific theory as arising from, integral to and tested in that social activity. Marxists of course agree with Popper that science is concerned with "problems". But *what* problems? Not just "theoretical" ones. And whence do they arise? Not just from theorising, but from social practice for the success of which theorising becomes necessary.

Falsifiability

To return now to Popper's allegedly infallible "criterion" to distinguish scientific from unscientific theory—it has become pretty famous, and is simply the criterion of "falsifiability".

If a theory is to be *tested*, as science must always test theories, says Popper, then it must be "falsifiable". That is, one must be able to specify exactly what observations would falsify it. It is not enough that observations should all *confirm* a theory. For theories can ingeniously be made up in such a way that whatever happens always confirms them. Such theories are unscientific because not "testable" at all. A scientific theory is one which can be falsified—and scientists demonstrate their scientific integrity by spending their time devising all manner of ways and means to try to falsify their theories.

It is of course quite true that, as Popper says, all scientific theories are *tested*, and that theories not subjected to scientific tests are not scientific. It is also true that scientific tests include procedures which if they yield negative results, amount to falsifications. But that is not at all the same thing as saying that there is one and only one "criterion" which by itself decides whether a theory is scientific, and that that is the criterion of its falsifiability.

In propounding his single "criterion" of falsifiability Popper is, in fact, guilty of *gross over-simplification* of the methods used by science to test theories.

He ignores the fact that science is a social activity and that scientific theories are tested in social practice and not simply by special observations made by scientists. And then he grossly over-simplifies when it comes to the complexities of the logical structure of scientific theories themselves.

He appears to assume that science consists of a collection of theories each of which is of the simple logical form of a *hypothesis*, "If A, then B", which has the force of a *prediction* that the next "A" to be encountered will be "B". If, then, an "A" turns up which is not "B", the hypothesis with its prediction is falsified, and another hypothesis must be thought up to replace it.

According to this account of science, each scientific hypothesis is tested on its own, quite independently of testing other connected hypotheses. But this is not at all how science in practice proceeds. And one has only to consider examples of important scientific theories to see that Popper's account does not fit them. For example, the general theory of relativity, the laws of thermodynamics, the theory of evolution by natural selection—to cite only three.

Popper's account of science does not fit Marx's theory of social and economic development in human society either. From this, Popper concludes that Marxist theory is unscientific. But if he followed up this line of argument he would find that no scientific theory is scientific.

Conjectures and Refutations

From his gross over-simplification about scientific theories and their "falsifications" Popper deduces a formula in terms of which he sums up the whole nature of science. This is the formula of "Conjectures and Refutations". Science, he says, consists in making "conjectures" and then seeking to "refute" them. Every scientific theory, he says, is a "conjecture". And the scientist is the man who *tests* his conjectures by continually trying to refute them.

According to this description of science as "conjecture", science is treated by Popper like some sort of game. It is of course quite true that there *is* a conjectural element in science. And certainly science proceeds by continually questioning and testing. But to say that all scientific theories are nothing but "conjectures" is simply to ignore the role of science in social practice.

Science is no game of making conjectures and then trying to see if one can refute them and make new ones instead. It is, on the contrary, a very serious social undertaking. And indeed, so far from recognising that scientific theories are only conjectures made by scientists we continually stake our very lives on them, in a way we certainly would not be well advised to do on conjectures.

For example, when engineers build a new bridge they use scientific theories to do so. Were those theories only conjectures, then the public would be

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ill advised to trust themselves on a bridge. An engineer who said "Well, my conjecture is that the bridge will stand the weight, but if it collapses I shall try out another conjecture" would not find employment in bridge-building.

Conjectures are made at what one may call the experimental and growing-points of science. But in science, theory is not *all* conjecture but becomes very well *established.*

For example, it is established that the earth is a planet of the sun, and that species of living organism on the earth have evolved by natural selection. One does not consider a man who spends his time trying to refute the theory that the earth is a planet to be a scientific man—on the contrary, he is considered to be a crank. But according to Popper, true scientists should be always trying to refute this conjecture about the earth.

The implications of his theory of "conjectures and refutations" are thus quite absurd. A serious philosophy of science does not propound such simple formulas which have absurd implications, but looks at science as it actually develops in social practice. And this is how Marxism approaches the problems of the philosophy of science.

The Fallibility of Observation

The over-simplifications in Popper's famous "criterion" of "falsifiability" are further exposed if one considers the actual conditions under which a theory *is* falsified.

According to Popper, this is a very simple matter. A theory predicts that if something is "A" then it will be "B". A report is made that a particular "A" is not "B" but "C", contrary to the prediction of the theory. The theory is then falsified or refuted—and must be replaced or revised. A single negative instance always suffices to "refute" a theory.

But this is not how scientists proceed.

On the contrary, when a negative instance is reported they do not simply accept that single report as the refutation of a theory but proceed to test the report itself. It is not simply that scientific theories are tested by observations—the observations are tested too.

Indeed, if someone reports an observation which refutes a very well-established theory, that does not at once dis-establish the established theory. On the contrary, the inference will be that there was something wrong with the way the observation was made. In that case, it is not the theory but the observation which will be tested and "refuted".

It was always a characteristic of the positivist philosophy that it regarded "observation" as somehow infallible—providing the basic "data" for science. But observation is not infallible, and no scientist ever in practice thinks it is. Once again, Popper, while apparently criticising and opposing traditional positivist philosophy, has in fact uncritically accepted its fundamental but false presuppositions.

Fundamental Theory

When it comes to the establishment in science of those very general theories which fulfil the role of the *fundamental* theories of science, then still less does the criterion of "falsifiability" have the simple application which Popper claims.

Popper's formula of "conjectures and refutations" simply does not apply in the case of fundamental scientific theory. And indeed, his account rendered of scientific theory—simply taken as an account of scientific theory in itself, even without consideration of the social contexts in which scientific theory is thought up, tested and applied—totally fails to take account of the actual structure and growth-process of theory. For Popper chooses to ignore the role of fundamental theory in science. Science does not become science by making a lot of conjectures and seeking to refute them, but by establishing fundamental theory for a whole field or range of inquiry, like, for example, the theory of evolution by natural selection in the sciences of life.

Marx's achievement was to have established fundamental theory for the science of society—in exactly the same way as fundamental theory has been established in other departments of science, and in full accordance with all other fundamental scientific theory.

Positivist or "Vulgar" Sociology

Coming now to Popper's contributions at the levels of sociology, one finds that just as his philosophy of science is merely a more sophisticated continuation of the traditional positivist philosophy of science, so are his contributions (if such they may be called) to sociological theory only glosses on the traditional theories of "vulgar" bourgeois sociology and political economy which have always gone hand in hand with the positivist philosophy.

The fundamental criticism which Marx himself pronounced on "vulgar" bourgeois political economy remains fully applicable to all the more sophisticated bourgeois sociology and political economy today.

Marx did not suggest that the bourgeois theorists had given false descriptions of social phenomena—ignoring facts, or inventing facts with intent to deceive (though some of them are on occasion not above doing so). On the contrary, the more able and honest among them have collated facts with great care. For example, they have conscientiously collected data about, say, costs, wages and prices, in order to state with some exactitude the interdependence of these economic variables in capitalist society.

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In this they have proceeded exactly as the positivist philosophy of science says science should always proceed—getting data from observation and then formulating theories to fit the observed facts.

And what they have achieved thereby has been, exactly as Marx in his *Theories of Surplus Value* said it was, theory enough to satisfy "the man preoccupied and interested from a practical point of view in the process of bourgeois production". Indeed, in terms of Popper's formulation about "problems", the problems vulgar bourgeois sociology and political economy are interested in are precisely the problems of such a man.

What Marx then criticised was the *superficiality* of the entire analysis thus presented. The theorists, he pointed out, had been content with "only describing the external phenomena". They had made no attempt to trace the "hidden structure", the real processes and relationships determining the "appearances".

Appearance and Reality

Science, however, is—as Marx pointed out—always concerned to discover the reality hidden behind the appearances.

The sociologists remain, indeed, in a pre-Copernican stage of science. All they do is to observe the appearances and describe (quite accurately) their apparent connections. But science is concerned to find out what determines the appearances. And then, as Marx wrote in a letter to Engels, "the thing is seen differently, the apparent movement is explained". Thus what we *observe* is the sun moving round the earth. But science shows that this is only the *appearance* of the earth moving round the sun.

In this connection, Marx wrote (employing the terminology used by Hegel) of discovering "the essence" determining the appearances. Such phraseology scandalises Popper, who immediately shouts "essentialism!". However, when science uncovers the "hidden reality" or "essence" behind the "appearance", it does so, not by seeking and obtaining some mystical revelation of "essence", but by strictly empirical inquiry, thoroughly tested in the scientific testing and practical establishment of theory.

Anyone, then, who sets out the observed timetable of the sun's movement round the earth provides thereby a perfectly accurate account of appearances. But he provides a false account of the solar system. Similarly, the bourgeois sociologists and political economists, painstakingly careful as they may be in recording facts, provide a false account of society in general and capitalist society in particular.

As for Popper's sociological analysis—in terms of which he undertakes to show that communism can only mean a "closed society" of tyranny and violence, whereas with capitalism we enjoy the "open society" of democracy and peaceful progress through piecemeal social engineering—it is not very hard to see that throughout he has confined his attention to appearances. Of course he is quite correct in saying that in society there are both "rulers" and "ruled", with various efforts by the "ruled" to "control" the "rulers". What he does not do—and condemns Marxism for doing—is to look behind all this. As for the exploitation of man by man, classes and class interests—these are hidden from his sight. And the revolution made in society by socialism is hidden from his sight as well. All he can see is the appearance of the thing—a great upset in which a lot of people get hurt.

And so for Popper all remains well in his adopted country of England. The English democratic bed would be comfortable to sleep in, he finds, if it were not for the "reds" making disturbances underneath. Throw them out! is his conclusion.

Partisanship in Philosophy and Science

The account rendered of scientific method by the positivist philosophy, a version of which Popper expounds, and in terms of which he pretends to refute Marxism, has little correspondence with what is actually done in the practice of science and the establishment of scientific theory. What it *does* correspond to is the practice of vulgar bourgeois sociology and political economy. It was born and has since been nurtured and grown up as the philosophical apologia for the pseudo-scientific apologetics of bourgeois society. Positivism is the bourgeois ideology *par excellence*.

In bourgeois society science has developed and flourished, and scientific method been pursued, in the investigations of natural processes. But only pseudo-science, with a pseudo-scientific philosophy to justify it, has been considered respectable in the fields of social studies.

This fact is readily understandable. The directors of Imperial Chemical Industries, for example, are interested to have found out for them as much as science can find out about the real processes of chemistry. They do not want merely to know about the appearances of chemical change, but about all that goes on beneath them. Yet when they present their balance sheet they do not want the real source of their profit to be revealed. On the contrary, they are interested in effectively concealing it. And when Marxist analysis reveals it, they hire professors to abuse the Marxists for them and to cover the reality up again.

Popper has proved himself to be one of the most abusive of abusers. And what he abuses Marxism for is its having undertaken an analysis in depth of bourgeois society.

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What Marx, after Hegel, termed "dialectic" consists precisely in such scientific analysis in depth. In applying dialectic in the understanding of human society and social affairs Marx was by no means (as Popper tries to make out) applying some miraculous intuition of "the essence" vouchsafed first to Hegel and then to himself, but was bringing to the understanding of social processes the same type of analysis in depth, of uncovering the reality behind and determining the appearances, that has long been practised in the sciences of nature.

And as Marx wrote in *Capital*, when exhibited in the science of society "dialectic is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors . . . because it lets nothing impose on it and is in its essence critical and revolutionary".

Professor Sir Karl Popper is certainly a prize example of the "doctrinaire professors". The very methods of science which he pretends to have made clear, but has only misrepresented, justify the scientific philosophy, sociology and politics of Marxism. And he himself, in his pronouncements, bears out Marx's conclusion that in bourgeois society the pretended reasonableness and objectivity of professors is only a mask for apologetics for capitalism and partisanship for the ruling class against the working class and against socialism.

Discussion Contributions on:

The Communist Party and Developments in British Culture

Jon Chadwick

What I try to do in this short piece is to outline the basis on which a discussion of ideology and those sectors of ideological production (culture) can be made, to make some indication of what is the historical character of bourgeois ideology and, lastly, to raise some of the very general problems which the party faces in this area in relation to Jeremy Hawthorne's opener on the subject in *Marxism Today* of November 1973. The actual problems of the specific relation between the theory and practice of the Party and the modes of representation, processes of production and formulation of a materialist (marxist-leninist) position within the different social activities which are given the unfortunate umbrella name of culture, I have not touched on.

It is clear to all marxists that the pursuit of politics, science, art and religion follows from and must be explained in terms of the mode of producing the means of subsistence of a given society. The production of surplus product is a pre-requisite for the development of these social activities just as their forms are determined by the specific social relations entered into in the course of this production. The increasing productiveness of human labour brought about by the capitalist mode of production, of which the relations of production are formed by class antagonisms, fundamentally increases the division of manual labour from mental labour which division itself reflects and is reflected by, permeates and is permeated by these class antagonisms. Furthermore this specific division of labour plays a special part in the formation of these social activities.

The State and the Ideological Apparatus

Under state monopoly capitalism, defined by a greater intervention of the state in the relations of production, the state (and through it the direct political interests of the ruling capitalist class) determines more directly the formation of the ideological apparatus in that society. The growing intervention of the state in ideological production has a tendency to make all areas of ideological struggle political or have a bearing on the maintenance of capitalist ruling class political power. So it becomes clear that the exploitation of the leisure time of the working class performs a dual function, first the consumption of the surplus labour time of the workers in those sectors of production and secondly to reproduce that necessary element in the means of capitalist production, a docile and con-

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fused labour force. This second function can be identified with the function of those sectors of ideological production in which the state has a monopoly (e.g. education) just as the interests of the monopolies which own commercial television, the Press etc. can be identified with the interests of the capitalist ruling class state.

Bourgeois Ideology

Ideology is the systems of ideas through which people represent the world to themselves or other people; it determines and is determined by the activity of people in the different areas of politics, science, art and religion. This determination is a material process. It is the expenditure of human labour power, muscle and brain. These social activities form and are formed by social institutions (political parties, theatre companies, publishing houses, churches and also church buildings, theatres, cameras, printing presses etc.). I said that these social activities "follow from and must be explained in terms of" the production of the social means of subsistence. The ideas that are produced by these activities have reflected in them the relations of production which determine the formation of the institutions which contain these social activities. The ideas of the ruling class (bourgeois ideology) therefore dominate the production of ideas, whether these ideas are mediated by politics, art, science, or religion.

Moreover, bourgeois ideology has its own specific historical character. There is a primary instance of the operation of bourgeois ideology in the field of political economy which enables us to define what this historical character is. The capitalist mode of production creates the material means by which class antagonisms can once and for all time be abolished. It continually revolutionises the conditions of production, constantly increasing the productiveness of human labour in order to increase the relative surplus value in different sectors of production. By technological development and the centralisation of productive forces (labour power and means of production) it creates an absolute increase in the surplus product and a class, the proletariat, which is its gravedigger, the historical agent which, through its political practice, will transform the absurd, anarchic relations of capitalist production into socialism.

The development of the productive forces under socialism will enable the abolition of class antagonism and the transition to the perfectly intelligible and reasonable productive relations of communism. The capitalist mode of production consequently lays the basis for the abolition of bourgeois ideology, which although it does not admit it to itself, is class antagonistic. That is not to say that bourgeois ideology cannot conceive of class struggle. Marx, of course, did not invent class struggle or class antagonisms but he saw this struggle as finite and the antagonisms as absolute. In other words where bourgeois ideologists see class struggle as a permanent unending process within capitalism, marxists understand through their analysis of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat that these antagonisms will destroy capitalism.

Appearance and Reality

Under capitalism the private appropriation of social wealth is obscured by the very process of production and exchange. A commodity, the economic cell-form of capitalism, appears to have value only in relation to another commodity. Marxists know that the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of average social labour time that is necessary for its production. That material relations between men appear as social relations between things is a contradiction characteristic of a process of production which has mastery over man instead of being controlled by him. Bourgeois ideology presents this appearance as reality and then proceeds to present the capitalist mode of production as absolutely beyond man's control, as an unquestionable force of nature.

So just as capitalism is characterised as a mode of production by the constant revolution of the conditions of production, in which process its own passing away is immanent, ideologically it is characterised by representations of that mode of production as a part of the permanent natural order of things. Bourgeois ideology does this because firstly, by restricting the questions it asks it has a tendency to reflect only how things "appear" and secondly, by appearing itself to have no interest in the matter, it attempts to appear objective. It is precisely this dumb reflection of the world which attempts to prevent us from seeing that it "reflects" the interests of the ruling class.

This apparent absence of what marxists call ideology within bourgeois ideology takes its roots from a fundamental and unique characteristic of capitalism relating to the law of value. The relations of capitalist production depend on the establishment of a class of "free" labourers. This can only take place when the idea of human equality has gained the force of a popular prejudice. Marxists know that the reality which stands behind these illusions of freedom and equality perpetuated by bourgeois ideology is the freedom of commodities to equate themselves with (or find their equivalence in) other commodities.

It clearly would not have worried a slave-buyer what view of the world his purchase had, but when the capitalist meets the "free" wage labourer in the market place he says "I have the means of production, you have the labour power, come and work in

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my factory" and his alter ego, the bourgeois ideologist adds "I am a human being like yourself. I didn't arrange things like this. Its just the way the world is. You are perfectly free not to take up my offer." The power of the capitalist in this *individual* exchange is no illusion. The labourer accepts the offer and *seems* to accept this view of the world by doing so. He can only understand his oppression in co-operation with his fellow workers. He can only develop his understanding by combining with his fellows in collective action, by waging the class struggle. The first struggle waged collectively by the working class is to limit the working day, to claim back from the capitalists a part of the absolute surplus labour time.

However every economic demand conceded by the capitalist class in the struggle increases the will and to a certain extent the opportunity for the capitalist class to gain an ideological hegemony over the workers' minds. It is in this constant struggle to dominate ideological production that bourgeois ideology obliterates its own character as a system of ideas in the service of the ruling class, and does so both in the heads of the workers and in those of the most high-flown of its "artists" and "philosophers".

What I have tried to indicate is that bourgeois ideology has a specific historical function which determined its mode of operation. The ideas it produces through its various practices relate directly or indirectly to the relations of production. We never see "bourgeois ideology" but we see plays and films, read books and newspapers, watch television, look at photographs, paintings and adverts and listen to music etc. There is a danger when we talk in abstract terms that we might present a system of ideas as if it were a disease or had a life of its own. On close examination of any of these areas of production and consumption certain specific conditions would appear, certain prohibitions, prejudices, inclinations would become evident. Ideas are mediated not just by the choice of a subject but by the mode of representation and the process of production itself. We could see how these elements related to the capitalist world outlook and to the actual relations of production, distribution and exchange of capitalism. This is not just a critical process it is an essential part of the practice of any writer, poet, painter, philosopher, academic, actor, actress etc. who attempts to be conscious of what they are doing.

I used an example from political economy because in this area the more general aspects of bourgeois ideology expose themselves; also marxist theory is more developed there. It is worth noting in this context that Marx's theoretical analysis of the capitalist mode of production *Capital* is subtitled "A critique of political economy". Marx's struggle to practice his scientific method was accompanied by an ideological struggle against bourgeois political economy.

"Sides Must be Taken"

We know, as communists, that if we do not consistently put across a correct analysis of the state based on Marx and Lenin's theoretical work we will never defeat opportunism, a manifestation of bourgeois ideology in the labour movement. However, as I have said, bourgeois ideology operates in other areas besides politics, areas in which our party is not so directly and vitally concerned, but the struggle against bourgeois ideology in politics determines the struggle in those other areas.

The question is, what role can the party, the conscious vanguard of the working class, play in communications, art, science etc. It is clear that although we organise political meetings, distribute pamphlets and leaflets which rival the meetings and propaganda of the bourgeois parties, although we have a national daily which rivals the bourgeois national press, the party is not, for example, in a position to set up a rival television company, film production company, art gallery, theatre etc. but it can and must take up a critical attitude and wage a class struggle in these different areas. In my view this does not consist in formulating a communist theory of art or science etc., nor in laying down a "party line" in these areas but it does involve "theorising" and this is bound to involve the constant formulation of a "correct position" which corresponds to the theory and practice of the party in politics.

It is not sufficient, in my opinion, to encourage comrades to have "arguments" as if the party was a neutral forum. If there is a class struggle to be fought then sides must be taken. Marxists must relate their criticisms and practices of art, science etc. to a correct understanding of society as a whole and of Marxist method. It is not sufficient to base an analysis of anything on concepts which we admit might be "rather undialectical". Each sector of ideological production e.g. poetry, painting, literature, film, theatre etc. have different material bases. If we are going to talk about any of these we must be specific and technically competent to do so. This is the opposite of elitism. The techniques of different areas of ideological production *are* accessible. It is only the bourgeois ideologists who wish to keep them a secret. The products of these different sectors of production can only be examined from a Marxist point of view if we refuse to limit our questions to the product itself but probe deeper into the institutions and processes of production which created them.

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The "Theorising" Work of the Party

Furthermore, it is fruitless to lump these different sectors under the term culture. If it were difficult for the cultural committee of the party to define its function they would not get anywhere by staring at, puzzling over or investigating the etymology of the word culture. The problem of "two cultures" cannot be analysed by anecdotes about Lenin wandering around Edwardian London but by an examination of the different "levels" at which bourgeois ideology operates. There is bourgeois ideological production for the consumption of the working class and there is bourgeois ideological production for the consumption of intellectuals, artists, and other "enlightened" people.

The divergences and correspondences between these different "levels" need critical analysis. How this "theorising" work by the party relates to the actual work of poets etc. and comrades working in the entertainments and communications industry raises the problem of the division of manual and mental labour. It is evident that the sale of mental labour power by a journalist, theatre director, actress etc. involves contradictions which are revealed when the party involves such people in discussions at a cultural committee level in terms not just of the industrial organisations within those sectors of production but also in terms of the meaning and social significance of the products themselves. I am not suggesting this dialogue should stop any more than I am suggesting that the party invite the comrades working in Fords to discuss the design of the next model in the Ford range, but we need to be aware of this contradiction.

I agree with the general analysis of recent trends given by Comrade Hawthorn and the principles of the political fight which he outlined. As he says they remain meaningless unless they are worked out by comrades within the specific practices involved. My own contribution should really have related to what I know most about, the theatre, but I felt hesitant about doing this on the general theoretical foundation which comrade Hawthorn provides.

TRENDS IN YOUTH CULTURE.

Imtiaz Chounara.

It is unfortunate that John Boyd in his discussion contribution (*Marxism Today*, December 1973) starts off by saying that he will outline the case against the existence of a "youth culture" and then later goes on to say why he feels that youth culture is a negative development, "Youth's right to this heritage has been taken away and in its place a sensuous 'culture' has been erected" (p. 378).

Whether youth culture is a welcome development or not is up to discussion, but the first point to realise is that there are parts of our culture which are specifically youthful and qualitatively different from the rest of our culture. Also that in the sixties especially, there were cultural trends of youth which have deviated from the accepted norms and that the cultural differences between the different generations have increased.

Working Class Culture

Perhaps the discussion would have been put on a better base if Martin Jacques and John Boyd had discussed adult culture in Britain and the point of overlap between young and old people culturally. The fact is that for most working class men the three most important features of British culture are beer, football and television. For the female working class the first two factors are not so important, but women's magazines and bingo do, in fact, fill the gap. Young and old participate in all these cultural activities and although older people don't usually go into places like the "Kop" or "Stratford End" at football matches, football could not be considered as purely a youth activity.

All these aspects of working class culture are commercially exploited. John Boyd fails to mention this in his contribution where he appears to glorify the existing working class culture, and asks youth to rejoin its lost heritage. The ordinary young person's attitude towards his comments could be summed up by a few lines from "Quadrophenia" (The Who's latest LP) "My Mother Got Drunk on Stout, my dad couldn't stand on two feet as he lectured about morality".

Of course, the monopolies are cashing in on youth culture, similarly they are cashing in on working class culture. What else would one expect under capitalism? One must realise that when workers are alienated from and thus cannot enjoy their jobs,

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culture as a means of providing a break from dull monotonous jobs and stopping people having a mental breakdown so that they will go to work the following morning, has an important role to play as far as the ruling class is concerned.

That two drugs—alcohol and nicotine—are an accepted part of our British working class culture, was not mentioned. These drugs can cause varied problems—medical, social, financial, to ordinary working class people. Many other aspects of culture are negative—that it is accepted that men go out for a drink in the evening and the women wash the dishes, look after the kids, etc. Should a young girl go into a pub on her own, then she is looked on as a prostitute. One has only to listen to a few jokes to realise that a large percentage of them are either racist, sexist or anti-homosexual. How many Party members tell jokes about Irishmen without realising that this unconsciously perpetuates the myth about Irish inferiority. How much money is wasted by gambling on the pools, horses, dogs, bingo or raffles?

It thus becomes apparent that our culture is racist, sexist, based on addiction to drugs and largely escapist. Do we therefore condemn the workers from our pedestal of Communist morality and tell them to behave as pure Marxists? Surely to do so would be elitist and yet this is what John Boyd is doing to youth.

Although we call ourselves Communists, we must realise that we ourselves have been brought up under capitalism and as such are a product of our society. Thus, although being communists, our cultural habits are determined by the capitalist society we live in. If this is true of communists it is even more true of the rest of the working class.

As part of the working class we cannot alienate ourselves from the culture of that class. We have to fight within it to encourage progressive developments and combat the negative aspects. Lenin in 1920, when addressing the Russian YCL, was talking of culture under socialism. It is extremely improbable that youth culture in capitalist Britain in the 1970's could and would develop the way Lenin had wanted in Soviet Russia in the 1920's.

Immigrant Youth

Another factor which is of importance when discussing youth culture, is the question of black youth. Most of the young coloured people in Britain are caught in between two cultures—that of Britain and that of their parents. The cultural differences between an Asian and an English family are quite immense. In the former, the young people are expected to do as they are told. Young girls are discouraged from studying and are told to concentrate on looking after their younger brothers and sisters, cooking and general housework. Young Moslems are not allowed to drink by their more orthodox parents and pop music is often considered to be the epitome of western decadence. Thus we have the older generation advising the young people to remain true to their real culture. As expected, this causes antagonisms within the family and prevents black and white youth mixing freely (black people can be just as racist as white).

We must therefore fight for black youth to mix culturally with white youth but at the same time to retain their own cultural identity. This is an important part of the fight for black consciousness—to get respect for black people and their culture, not only amongst young white people but also amongst black people themselves. This cannot be done in a "black power" manner, putting black above white, but in a true Marxist manner, fighting for the rightful place of black workers alongside their white brothers as equals.

Progressive Developments

However, to return to youth culture as a whole, John Boyd makes the rash statement "The Beatles have made not one protest" (p. 376). It is true that none of the Beatles is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist member of the Communist Party, but neither is Scanlon, Lawrence Daly or David Skinner. Would John Boyd disassociate himself from the non-Party Left in the movement who play a progressive role?

Surely George Harrison's "Bangla Desh" and the special Bangla Desh Concert LP played a useful role on two grounds—raising money for people who were homeless and raising the question of national independence for an oppressed nation. John Lennon's "Power to the People", "Attica State", "Sunday, Bloody Sunday", "Angela" and "Working Class Hero" are just some examples of songs of his which have a political message. Although Lennon tends to be idealistic in a Utopian sense (for example "Imagine"), there is no doubt that his songs do make you think.

For every young person that the YCL reaches, a pop singer influences 1,000 times more. Thus on the admittedly rare occasions that a pop star releases a progressive record, the YCL should comment on it and try to encourage such developments. In the last ten years or so there have been protest songs which have been popular amongst youth (notably Dylan, Lennon, Harrison). This is not to say that "Top of the Pops" is a musical version of the *Morning Star*. The developments have been small but nevertheless welcome.

Although youth clothes is a booming enterprise, there have been some progressive developments. That young women can wear trousers (and other clothes which previously only the man could wear) is a step forward. However, it is true that big

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business has cashed in on the "unisex" market.

Negative Developments

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect is the commercialisation of youth culture. The changing fashions whereby social pressures force young people to spend more money on expensive clothes to stay in fashion, is another negative aspect. That it is no longer the age of teeny boppers, but rather the weeny boppers and the nappy boppers is very much the case. Groups like the Osmonds, the Sweet, Gary Glitter, have their strongest influences amongst the eight to fourteen year olds. It is this section of youth which big business is really cashing in on.

The spread of drugs amongst youth (working class as well as student) is disturbing, not from the viewpoint of Mary Whitehouse, but from the Communist viewpoint—that drugs will not solve the problems of capitalism. They may make it easier for you to escape from society for short periods, but society remains the same and sooner or later you must return to that society. However, most young people do not take drugs to "drop out" but as a social habit (as older people smoke, drink or watch TV).

Drugs is not the problem. The root problem is capitalism and its inability to cater for young people—socially, economically and politically. It is capitalism which causes the social pressures which affect youth in particular. The problem of looking for a job, trying to find a place to live, not being able to get on well with one's parents, are the problems of a divided nation (by class, not age). It is the rat race which drives youth to drugs, vandalism and crime.

Fidel Castro pointed out the difference between man's needs under capitalism and socialism—"Everybody knows that capitalist societies do not organise the economy for the production of material goods to meet the needs of man. Capitalist societies organise the economy for profit. Capitalist societies do not work to meet needs. Many times when a need has been met, they invent another one; they try to instil artificial needs in man".

Role of YCL

We have to accept the reality of the situation—that we are living in an advanced capitalist country. Our culture must reflect the society we are living in.

It is up to the YCL to work amongst young people—discussing and analysing youth culture and encourage the progressive developments. To go to the extremes of glorifying or dismissing outright the existing youth culture would be a fatal mistake for the YCL and the Party.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS (concluded)

influencing the distribution of personal wealth in Britain in the 1950's. He had concluded that there had been *no* marked change from the position in the 1920's. The present paper examines the position in the 1960's.

Despite all the ballyhoo (and five Labour Governments) he finds:

> "no very marked change in the relative numbers of self-made men as distinct from those with inherited wealth occurred between the mid-fifties and mid-sixties of the present century. . . . The fact that between a half and two-thirds of those who left £100,000 or more in the 1950's and 1960's were preceded by fathers leaving at least £25,000 illustrates the importance of having had a moderately wealthy father."

AN ELITE OF BISHOPS

The paper by Kenneth Thompson on "Church of England Bishops as an Elite" raises some interesting issues.

Bishops in the Church of England are usually appointed at a fair age. Their mean average age on first appointment to a diocese was 52.5 years in 1880, 53.1 in 1900, 51.2 years in 1960, and a letter to the *Times* of March 1, 1973, put at 53.5 the average age of the 12 new diocesan bishops appointed since 1970.

Their educational background, also, has been remarkably constant. In 1880-1899 90 per cent of Bishops studied at Oxbridge. In 1920-39 the figure remained the same. In 1969-70 88 per cent of diocesan bishops still had an Oxbridge education.

In contrast to this there is a marked decline in the number of parochial clergy who attend universities, a marked turn to a non-graduate clergy much closer in origin to the majority of the people.

We would recommend our readers to study this book on "Elites and Power in British Society". We do this partly because much of the careful research has given rise to material that is very valuable in applying a Marxist approach to questions of power, class and the state. The notes contain a wealth of bibliographical information. Moreover the jargon, confusions and contradictions in certain contributions, which may reduce some to tears, may push others to develop what is so sorely needed—further Marxist research on the class structure of contemporary Britain, on questions of the methods of exercise of capitalist power and of the character and working of the British state.

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CORRECTION

We regret that in the article on the Bulgarian Anti-Fascist struggle which appeared in our September issue there was no caption under the photograph printed on page 269. The photograph was that of Major Frank Thompson, taken in 1942.

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